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NELLY HAMILTON.

VOL. III.

NELLY HAMILTON.

BY

SHELSLEY BEAUCHAMP,

AUTHOR OF

"GRANTLEY GRANGE."

"Trust not appearances. Good often is
Where evil seems to be."

In Three Volumes.

VOL. III.

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NELLY HAMILTON.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANXIOUS TIME.—THE DEATH OF LITTLE BESSIE.

THE next thing that Lawson remembered, was finding himself bareheaded in the gorse bushes, and with a decidedly unpleasant sensation about the shoulders; but ascertaining, as he came to, that it was but a wrench, and that there were no bones broken, he sat up on end, and then he looked about him. A rustle up behind him made him turn—

his own horse down, and struggling, with his fore-legs through the reins. George jumped up instantly, and freed him from them, then patted him, and sat down on the slope and looked him over; and as he did so, he heard a horn and hounds, and saw them in the flat there coming to him; but bearing to the left, they turned again, and went for Hurcot.

It all came to him then, and pretty quickly, for it brought that moment's stoppage by Park Hall, when he had heard them running in the gorse at Wannerton.

He felt himself turn queer, a dread came over him—a sickening feel, like one about to drop. Below him, at the bottom, was a brook, that widened out there to a little pool. He took the reins and led his horse down to it. The pool was clear; and as he stooped to drink out of his hands, and splash his face with water, a ghastly face

met his—his own, 'twas white! He nearly fainted; for as the horse moved on to reach the water, he saw the saddle on the right side had no stirrup! Thus, therefore, was there no mistake about it.

He sat there, thought it out, and then looked round. He found the stirrup, and he found his hat; but where was Lewis?

He called; no answer! He led the horse on further, looked about him; then crept on up the bank and stopped half way. Went on again, and stopped, and made his horse fast to a young oak tree. "Lewis! John Lewis; speak! You needn't fear. It all is over now!" No word, no sound!

He pushed up through the bushes, step by step, and slowly reached the top. "Lewis, John Lewis, call if you are living!" No answer. He held back for a moment at the quarry, and then looked in. Some seventy feet beneath him lay the

horse, stretched out, and dead; a hat and whip beside him. Yes, "it all was over now." It made him giddy, and he nearly fell. He felt as Cain felt when he had murdered Abel!

It was some time after he had led his horse away, before he could fully realize the situation in which he had placed himself; and then, he would have given worlds to have once more met with Lewis. That his old enemy was dead was certain, for by the horse there lay his hat and whip, and such a drop as that must have killed him instantly!

How to escape detection was the question; for now, the only thing was his own safety. Still, what proof was there against him? None, when he thought things over, none whatever! Two men full gallop, one some way ahead, and hounds out, running. Both hunting, evidently. Besides, he had not

killed him. It was not his own fault that the quarry faced them; Lewis had himself to thank, for quitting the high road there for the fields.

But what about that stirrup and revenge; what if that fatal leap had not been taken? Would he, with Lewis at his mercy then, have held his hand while thirsting for "revenge?" Well, after all, it was but "life for life;" and he himself might have been killed by Lewis, if fairly fighting. It was over now, he must look out for himself.

He counted chances, peered all round about him—no soul in sight. He mounted, and felt better; rode round the bottom, past the gorsy slope, and there he found the entrance to the quarry, blocked up by soil and turf—the banks stocked down—and hetherings. He breathed more freely, and he rode away, for now 'twas evident the quarry was dis-

used, and none would go there; and the chance was slight of people looking in. He had dropped his whip—but then it was his own, so that did not matter. He would put a good face on it, and forget it.

He got into a cart-track, and then followed it through several fields, and came out shortly on the Stourbridge Road, close to "The Wagon and Horses," the old inn there. It was half-past one, so just three hours until his train was due. He put the horse in, and then had some brandy, and ordered dinner.

When his dinner was ready, however, he wished that someone else could have had it, for he certainly did not feel keen about it; as, though he had sat for some time behind the paper, he had not read a line—his thoughts kept in one groove, and he could not turn them. But two men, with harp and fiddle, on the tramp, turned in to rest a bit, and

for a drink, and for what odd coppers they could there pick up; so George stood treat and paid them, and they played up merrily, and for some time; but for all that the current of his thoughts kept on its course, though their playing gave a reason for his lingering.

At last he started; rode slowly to Churchill, left the horse at the "Swan," and then walked from Blakedown to the station. The lad was there, and a man on horseback who was talking to him. "Here, Jack," said Lawson, after he had seen to his traps, and got his ticket, "is a shilling for you; the horse is at the 'Swan.' Say that I met the hounds, and ride him quietly." So the lad left.

"You managed to kill him then, at last, sir?" said the man. George started! "I thought you would by the pace you went." His colour left him. "I was with 'em

myself, sir, when they came back to Hurcot," continued the fellow, "and went away for Dunclent. I hear he took you to the Fenny Rough, then turned back up the meadows. A precious lot came down, they said, beyond the railway." "Oh, did they?" said Lawson, now easier in his mind, "I did not notice." "No sir, I dare say not. No doubt you got well away with 'em, and were in the front rank. That's where it is, sir; it's the one as is behind as can tell you most about it, how this one fell, and t'other came to grief. He knows too much, he does, to ha' been with the leading hounds. Show me the man, say I, as can tell you how the hounds went, but knows little o' the 'field,' and I'll mark him for a first-flighter, who's had the hounds in the front of him, and the 'field' behind. That's the man for my money."

"You got thrown out yourself, then?"

"I did, sir, through this great brute. I heard the crash of 'em, though, when they killed in the New Wood, two hours ago." George thanked him mentally for information. "Ah,! will you?" said the fellow, as the horse reared, and he hit him over the head. "You won't be said then? He's a nasty tempered beast," said he, "but as long as he keeps on his fore-legs, I never meddle with him; but if he gets rearing of hisself up in that unnateral manner, why if I'm on him, sir, he's apt to meet with something as pricks his conscience, and likewise considerably flustrates him, and makes him ask hisself a questin."

"Yes," said Lawson, "those rearers are nasty ones." "Very, sir," said the man, "and hard to stick. But a real American's the tester, though; one o' them confounded buck-jumpers. When he sets to in real earnest, sir, if you hav'n't got your hold-

fast legs, and your stickin trousers on, it's no use; your go-to-meetin breeches won't then save you. As long as the girths hold, there you are, or ought to be; but if they bursts, then it's there you were." "Yes, I suppose so; but here comes my train!" "Now steady, horse! I've got him here to face it," said the fellow, as Lawson left him, and moved to the platform. But the horse, as the doors slammed-to, and the whistle sounded, would have no more of it, so he turned short round, and bolted.

Now George was in a carriage all alone, and continued so to Worcester. The journey was unpleasant; for he saw that dead horse nearly all the way—and Lewis under him!

"Well, George," said Frank, when he met him the next morning, "so you have got back again, have you? Well, I cannot compliment you on your looks, I must say—you have been keeping it up a bit, I expect,

hav'n't you? Did you see anything of the Albrighton while you were out?" "Yes, sir, I did—I was with them yesterday; they met at Island Pool." "Did you kill?" said Frank. Lawson checked himself at "I," and said, "we did sir, in the New Wood. They found at Island Pool, and went away to Hurcot; and from there to Wannerton Gorse, and across to Churchill, pointing in a line for Cornsall; but, being headed, he turned again for Hurcot, where they rattled him for some time, and ran him from there across for Dunclent, and on to the Fenny Rough; back up the meadows, and, after a first-rate run, ran into him, sir, in the New Wood." "Ah!" said Frank, "I wish I had been with them. Were you in at the death, George?" "Close at, sir," said Lawson, whose reply referred to another quarter. "Aye, I know you would not be far out, if you were anything like well mounted. You did not meet

with Lewis, I suppose, about those gipsy commons?" "I did not meet him on the commons, sir." "That's right, then. I hope you'll never meet; but if you do, just mind and keep your temper, or you'll repent it. He may be bad, yet not the man you think him. Forget him, George."

Yes; it was all very well to say "forget him;" how was he to forget him? He had dreamt of him, thought of him, seen him, all the night—there, in the quarry! He wished he could forget him; but there was no chance of it now, with him lying there under that dead horse, and after he had said too what he had about poor Jessie. "Your sister's living, and she's not with me," were words which set him thinking. Could it be possible, he asked himself, that Lewis told the truth, or was it simply a barefaced lie, just blurted out to stop him? If he had but stopped he might have told him then—

yes, all about her; or what he knew, at least."

But could it be true? Well, the handkerchief was all the proof they had, and—though he could not see it then, he saw it now—that may have been dropped there—by her, of course—and yet she might be living! And if so, never hearing from her was no wonder, cursed as she was that night by her own father. And then again, that picture, too, looked odd, it was so like her—the very image of her! Could that be chance? A little time ago her death seemed certain; but now he knew not what to think. It might be so; it very likely was so, that she still lived. But how was he to know—how ascertain? His thoughts would soon, he saw, be worse than ever, for he who lived was dead, and he the cause of it; and she whom he thought dead might still be living! With whom, and where, and how, he asked

himself, if not alone, if not in poverty? The one who lay there dead could have told him all; that now seemed certain. "Your sister's living, and she's not with me," showed he must know, and know, too, all about her. But hurried to his death, the chance was lost.

The days went by, and Lawson still was brooding. That "white face" was his father's bane, an ashy face was his; and the cause with each was passion.

The marked change that was in Lawson's looks and manner, passed not unnoticed. Frank and his father, too, both saw it plainly; for till the woodcocks left at the middle of the month, he was with them shooting—or rather beating for them—about the bottom of the common and the copses; but they could not make it out, as he kept his counsel: Frank thought the cause was little Mary Moss, but George said "no," and so it passed.

The March winds that had buffeted the

lambs, and blown the rooks about, had now ceased; and in their place came sunny April showers, that forced the young leaves, and brought out the blossoms, in lanes, in mead, on commons, and in copse, thick as the birds there singing. The grass was greening on each hedgerow bank, where violets sprung and purple tendrils twined, and crimson stems of young oaks branched and budded. The sky was blue again; the air was warm; the primrose time had come. It was that time which, above all others, is so looked forward to by children—the time of Spring; the time of moving birds, and buds, and blossoms; when in the woods all woodland flowers are springing, and meadows fill with buttercups and daisies.

There is no time in which children in the country are more joyous than in that first flush of spring; when, after the long and dreary winter, all is so new to them, and

all so bright; and they can run and frolic about the lanes and the fields, and pick what flowers they please; or almost lose themselves in the woods in scrambling after the primroses; or in scouting about, through the brambles, for hyacinths and anemones, or what else they can find there. In all the Eymor lanes were scattered flowers, dropped here and there by those who gathered them; for all now rushed off at once between school hours, and munched their little dinners in the woods—all but the tiny ones, for flowers were brought them.

You could see where the children had been, by the primroses; a blossom here, and a blossom there, and then a handful—thrown down or dropped, they were so plentiful. This month it would be handfuls of primroses, and next month balls of cowslips, with which they pelted each other; or stuck them

in their bonnets or their hair, while mocking at the cuckoo or the jay, or cawing at the rooks; or paddling, stockingless, about the brooks, with merry shouts. It was a happy time for all, none liked to miss it.

But one did miss it, as she had done before—poor Bessie Benbow, who at last was sinking; her young life ebbing, as young life was coming—the bees, the birds, the painted butterflies; young things about the farms and in the fields—without, all sunshine; but within, all gloom. No more for her the racings in the meadows, as when she came there; the ramblings in the woods, the search through lanes, for flowers and nests, and what was bright or pretty. A fading flower herself, she had done with all; the only flowers she saw were those not growing, those which Miss Nelly brought her day by day.

The winter, as we have said, had been a

mild one, and the poor child had, contrary to expectation, lingered through it; but she now was sinking—just at her fourteenth year—worn out and wasted almost to a shadow, in spite of every care and every kindness. With Nelly, she had been an especial favourite, for she was a nice child, and a pretty child, and she had nice ways with her, and she was pleasant spoken, too. For it was but four years ago, since her mother—who had seen better days—had brought her there for change, from Warwickshire; and as she had not therefore acquired the Eymor sayings or the country talk, she seemed to have a certain degree of refinement about her, that to Nelly was very pleasing. The doctor had done all he could for her, and at one time, about a month ago, he thought that she might rally; but an increased cough, which caused the rupture of a small vessel, turned the scale; and it was now only a mere

question of days, how long she lasted, as the slightest hæmorrhage would take her off.

It was now the middle of the month—April; and Nelly, who had been up in the morning with her friend Clara to see her, had left her comfortable. After dinner, just as she was getting into the carriage, with Laura and Frank and her father, to go to a concert in Worcester—a great treat to her, and one to which she had long looked forward—she saw young Tim, Bessie's brother, turn aside at the gateway. "What is it, Tim?" said she. "You want me, don't you?" But Tim began to cry, and said, "No, miss, not now; please, miss, you're going out." "Your sister's worse; is that it, Tim? Now tell me." "Please, miss, she's dying; mother says she is;" and his tears came faster. "She has asked for me, I know. Now you run back, and tell her

that I'm coming; but don't you say, Tim, I was going out." So Tim went off.

"Papa," said Nelly, getting down again, "you must go without me." "No, that we won't. We'll wait awhile," said he. "No, don't do that, papa. I may be long; and I could not now enjoy it. I shall go and stay with her till all is over." "You are a good girl, Nelly," said Mr. Hamilton. "Well, do so, then, for if you left her I should like you less. When duty calls, put pleasure on one side. The time to do good is when it is needed; it is doubly welcome then, as you know, Nelly. Say what is kind from me and each of us. I'll see her mother has what help she needs; you tell her so."

So Nelly hurriedly then changed her dress, and picked some flowers, and went there.

As she entered the room, she found the child propped up and lying in her mother's arms, and dying, evidently; for a stained

white handkerchief lay on the pillow. Into her hands she put the flowers, and kissed her. The child returned it, said "I knew you'd come," and smiled. "Don't talk, my darling; it will do you harm. I shall not leave you; I am come to stay." And Nelly sat upon the bed beside her, and watched her for an hour as she lay with glistening eyes and breathing hurriedly; the while the pink spot on each cheek grew paler.

Her mother moved to lay her gently down, to see to Tim, whose crying downstairs could be heard up there, and seemed to pain her; but looking up, she said, "Don't leave me, mother; don't—I think I'm going!" So Nelly went down to him and returned, and sat again beside her: the change was near.

One sad appealing look, and then tears came; for she heard the birds' songs through the lattice-window; she saw the curtains flapping in the breeze; she felt the warm

soft air upon her cheeks; she smelt the flowers that she herself had planted, below there in the garden. "It's hard to go just now," she said; "it's hard to leave them! But put these in my coffin—on my grave. Oh, dear, Miss Nelly, you have been so kind! You'll see me, won't you, when you come to heaven? And you too, mother, and poor little Tim—we'll meet again, I hope?"

"I hope so too, my darling," whispered Nelly; "it's hard to lose you thus, but 'tis God's will. You're going to heaven, my child, and that's our comfort—where we shall go, I trust, in His good time. God grant we meet you!"

The clock ticked on—another hour was gone; the child lay motionless with half-closed eyes, and seemed to sleep. At length she raised her head. "You have not left me, have you; where are you, mother?

Is dear Miss Nelly there?" Her sight was dimming.

The day was ending. Before the dusk of evening, light moved on—there, in that little room. It left the corners, crept along the floor, and travelled slowly from it to the bed; then lit the flowers, her face, her sunny hair; lingered a moment, trembled on the wall, flashed to the ceiling in one patch, and vanished. The sun had set, the night was near at hand; and Bessie's face was paling. The end was coming!

They both bent down and kissed her.

The little hand, twined in the tresses of her mother's hair, relaxed soon afterwards its hold, and whitened; the cheeks were marbled, and the blue eyes veiled, and from her feeble grasp the flowers had fallen, down by the golden framework of her face, thus decked in death. One long and deep-drawn

sigh through parted lips, and then this pretty child had breathed her last!

Six days had passed, six long days to the mother, and in the quaint old churchyard in the village, she stood with school-girls crying by a grave, wherein the coffin of the one they loved lay strewn with flowers—green boughs and wild flowers, gathered in the woods.

Thus, with the sweet spring flowers, she lies at last, under the sunshine, and the birds that sing all through the day on daisied sods their songs, until the evening, when the sun goes down; when the old yew trees claim their share, and shadow with outstretched arms the little grave below.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD NEWS.—PLEASANT DREAMS FOR NELLY HAMILTON.

THE month of May—the showers of April over, and snowy petals blowing from the boughs, while apple-bloom was spreading. It was the month for Nelly to leave her lovely country for three long months in Town—a longer time than she had ever left it; and, although she had been looking forward to it eagerly and joyously, now that the time was nigh, she almost wished that she had not to go; not for so long, at least. At other times, she had been back again before

the flowers were over—the wild flowers in the woods and in the fields — and soon enough for the haymaking, but this time she would have to miss it; and also to miss so very much to which she had always looked forward and enjoyed, year by year, that, "three months" to her seemed very long indeed, in spite of all those three months meant to her. For there was so much daily before her to remind her of the pleasures of the country, that regret was forced upon her; as that she saw and heard, brought calm and quiet, and pleasant thoughts, and many pleasant feelings—a state of mind conducive to her comfort.

Child-voices in the meadows, rippling laughter, the song of birds, the busy hum of bees; the sigh of wind, the rustlings of the leaves, the swaying boughs, and pattering of the rain; the bleat of lambs, the tinkling tones of bells. Larks in the air,

and thrushes in the groves; the rooks, the wood pigeons, the cooing doves, and all those sounds we hear when in the country—sounds that we like to lie and listen to, on thymy hills, and on great gorsy commons, or catch their music in green lanes and fields.

The little gardens, too, so hedged with sweetbriar, and set thick with gillies; the thatched white cottages, with hives and draw-well—slabed with red quarries and ringed round with daffodils. Tiled barns, well splashed with purple stains and moss; sheds, grey and brown, the farms, the ivied tower; the old elm avenue, the wealth of green. Tall poplars, long high hedges, shelving banks; old thorns and rutty roads, and rustic figures; the thin blue smoke that floated up the woods, the men there felling timber.

Those mornings, too, when violets smelt so sweetly, those evenings through the hawthorns

and the beans; those days when meadow-sweet gave out its odour, and scent of apple-bloom came with the breeze. Good-bye to all!—to hill and dale, to woods and winding river; to early morning walks and evening strolls, and nightly listenings to the nightingales; for country now must be exchanged for Town.

The news of Nelly's departure was sad news for the cottagers. Three "weeks" had always seemed a long while, but the three "months" that she now spoke of, was to them an age; so long had they been accustomed to connect their daily doings with hers, and to have her amongst them. The Rector's daughter, Miss Clara, was very nice and kind, but she was not like their "dear Miss Nelly," who seemed somehow to belong to them, as she knew all their little troubles and their cares; and they could say what they wished to her, and tell her any-

thing. And then she always took such an interest in what they did tell her, from the flowers that were growing in their gardens, and the bees that were humming by the hives, to the little misbehavings of their respective juveniles. Nelly was the confidant upon all occasions, and a good word from her, which they all had, put matters right; so that with her at home, things always went on well, and when she was away they missed her sadly.

It was a trial, too, to her, to leave them all, for she was so fond of them; and there was sorrowing on either side as the time drew near. Poor Bessie's death, though, left one pang the less, the child so looked to her. A simple headstone was to mark the grave, and flowers were planted.

It was a pleasure to her friend Clara Arundell to see how Nelly was liked, when she went round with her, for the formal

handing over to her care of the invalids and the old people; and to hear afterwards all that they said of her—her goodness, kindness, and unselfish ways—which proved to her she was just the genuine girl she always thought her; warm-hearted, willing, full of sympathy—that sympathy for which the poor so crave, that lightens all their woes and lessens ills.

It was this same feeling of sympathy, so largely shared in by Mr. Arundell, which contributed so greatly to make him popular with his poor parishioners; for his were no visits of mere tracts and talk. He knew the secret, with poor folks like those, of appealing through home comforts to the mind; and that where counsel or consolation would be rejected when there was nothing in the cupboard, shelves fairly furnished gave a patient hearing.

He was not one when, through short work

or sickness, men were down, to think a tract the end-all and the be-all, and leave that and nothing more, "hoping it would do them good:" he never mocked a man so in his trouble—he knew human nature better. He first cared for them, then he sympathised, and got a hearing from them as "a friend"—a fellow-man who had their cause at heart. There are ways and ways of gaining what you want: his way succeeded, for it gained him gratitude—that, and a well-filled church, and men's good words. The outlay cost him little; the result he valued. If new-comers in the parish came not to church, no dire anathemas or hard words were his; all he did was by kindness—kindness and interest in their cottage-life; so he always got them there, and there he kept them, for they could not then hold back for very shame. Not one in Eymor ever spoke against him, for he was what each country clergyman should be—the

poor man's friend, with no wide gulf between them.

His eldest daughter, Clara, who so ably assisted Nelly in her little missions of charity throughout the parish, she also was well liked; and she found—as others have found too—that there would be more gratitude in the world were there more call for it. You cannot expect people to go into raptures about nothing. Help them in their troubles when you can, and wait the sequel. The world is not so black as it is painted; there is blue sky still for seeking.

Though the coming journey to Town was regarded with mingled feelings by Nelly, it was not so with Annie Hamilton, who looked forward to it with the greatest pleasure; as she had never been far from home, and it would be her first visit to London, which, to a country girl, means very much. Therefore when Nelly went up to Bickley to pay her

promised visit of a week to her uncle, and bring her cousin back with her, she found bright Annie brighter with the expectation; as "to Town at last!" opened up a new world to her, which, in imagination, she had already peopled.

That word "London" has a great charm for country girls, and it is no wonder that they open their eyes when they get there. The first evening that they spend by the Ride, in the Season, reveals more to them than they could have dreamt of. The gaiety of the scene, and the incessant passing and re-passing of wealth, rank, and fashion, is a thing that when first seen is not soon forgotten. "London," was the one word now ever present to her, and the going with Nelly, who could tell her "all about it," when they did get there, heightened the joy of it. She could see those glorious old woods at any time, and she should be back again

in a month, for a scamper with Fred through the haycocks. But with Nelly it was different. She loved the country; and even with her glimpses of Town life, she did not know how people could live out of it; no, not even in the winter; and when she thought — as now she often did think—of that future time when she would have to leave it—if hearts were true, and love was long—it seemed to her it would only be the constant association with her dear Harry that could make it bearable.

The two girls had a merry time of it, for Fred was at home; and as Nelly's escapade with Tearaway had been unthinkingly revealed by Annie, that headstrong animal was again brought under subjection, and Annie herself, though he kicked her off twice, rode him in turn with Nelly; so, altogether, that ungovernable cob had rather a bad time of it for that week. Of course there were rambles

in the woods, and great scramblings after hyacinths, and sundry searchings after late primroses, which here and there were still to be found in cool and shady places. The pine wood, too, was visited, and the glorious view enjoyed; as was also that long open strip in the wood on the hill, where the crushed ferns in the autumn had made such a path of colour to the big black yews by the ride, when she and Harry sat there side by side, and he told her that he loved her.

They returned together on the Saturday—Saturday, the third of May—as on Monday they were to start. That day was an eventful one, not only to Annie Hamilton as a first set-out to "see the world," but also to one in Eymor, and that one Lawson. Two months had elapsed since that fatal leap, and to Lawson's looks ten years at least were added; and his startled, nervous manner had become so marked, that Frank, seeing clearly

that he had something on his mind, persisted in questioning him until he got to the bottom of it; and when Lawson told him all about it he knew not how to act. "Are you quite certain, George?" said Frank. "No mistake about it, sir," was the reply, "for there, beside the horse, lay hat and whip."

It certainly looked like it; and, as the quarry was disused, it was not strange it never had been named in any local paper. As inquiry was impossible, Frank did not see what could be done in it, though the matter was becoming serious for Lawson. At length, however, light came. After tea that evening, when Frank came back from market, and settled down for a good chat with the girls, who had just returned from Bickley, he caught sight of the "Herald" on the sideboard, and turned it over; then suddenly got up and left the room, and went to Landimoor.

George was alone, and brooding. "Come here a bit, I want you." They went round to the shed, and there sat down. "I've good news for you, George—John Lewis must be living! The horse alone lay dead there in that quarry. See here—I'll read it. Listen!"

CHURCHILL.—WANTED, AN OWNER—SINGULAR DISCOVERY.—Those who have lately travelled along the Stourbridge Road, may have noticed a fine field of winter wheat, near Iverly Hill, and to the right of the "Wagon and Horses." They may have also noticed a considerable clamour there made by bird-tenders. It seems that for some time past a perfect colony of rooks has assembled there, or at least on the brow of the bank above it; and that, instead of alighting on the wheat, they have each time swooped down into an old quarry that is there, and which has long been disused. The constant repetition of this behaviour on their part, to the total ignoring of the wheat, attracted the lads' notice, and at last, one of them looked in; and, from what he told the farmer, the quarry was unstopped, and entered. The attraction for the rooks was then found to be the nearly clean-picked skeleton of a horse, which must, therefore, have lain there for some time. The singular part of the matter is this, that no owner can be found for it. As there was no

trace of saddle or bridle, it was seen that the horse must have strayed there through some open gates, and have tumbled into the quarry; but, although inquiries have been made at every farm in the parish, and also of people in the adjacent hamlets, and of those who were out with hounds the last time they crossed there (as a whip was found in a furrow), no one has lost a horse, nor do they know anyone who has! The remains have been seen by Mr. Francis, the veterinary surgeon, who was at the farm when they were found; and it is his opinion, from the lightness of bone and the general build, that the skeleton is that of a hack, and one not badly bred. There is one tooth out in the lower jaw, and the height would be 15.3; so, if any gentleman has found himself a horse the less, a ride to Churchill may give information. It has been surmised that the strayed horse might have belonged to one of the many gangs of gipsies that infest that neighbourhood, and who do a good deal in the "coping" business; but, as it seems the camping-ground in Broom Lane is the only one which has been lately occupied by those who had horses with them, the supposition is scarcely tenable; as the only gates through which the quarry can be reached open from the Stourbridge Road, and are continued through some fields—the distance from Broom Lane being at least four miles. We can, therefore, only end as we commenced, with "Wanted, an owner."

"Thank God for that!" said Lawson,

as Frank ceased reading. "Yes," was the reply, "you have need to thank Him. Now let this be a warning, George, and curb your temper." "I will," said he; "I've suffered for it quite enough, God knows."

"Now it is evident to me," said Frank, "as the rooks could not well have eaten the whip, to say nothing of the hat, which you say you saw there"—"Distinctly, sir"—"that somebody must have been there and fetched it, and have also fetched the saddle and bridle; and considering that no other remains were found but the skeleton of the horse, Lewis must be living, or at all events it is fair to infer he was not killed in the quarry. In fact, as the pace made it quite impossible for those gipsy fellows to notice in which direction you went, further than the turn of the road by the blacksmith's, I see no other conclusion we can come to than that Lewis was flung when his horse fell, and that he

afterwards got into the quarry and fetched them out himself.

"Now, if he be really living, you and he might meet again. What shall you do, George, if you do meet him?" "Do, sir? Well, I'll say 'If you've not injured Jessie—there's my hand.'" "You will?" "I will, sir," Lawson said. "Then do so, if you meet; the best thing for you; and try to forget it, now it's off your mind." "It's well it is, sir, or I should have been like father. I could not have stood it, Mr. Frank, much longer."

George, from that day, was a changed man altogether, and for the better; and as sleep came to him, his haggard looks went off. The farm was no longer neglected, his snappish manner ceased, and he was up and stirring, instead of still and brooding; and before long his former cheerfulness returned.

On the morrow, Fred came down from

Bickley, to accompany Nelly and his sister on the next morning, and to have a few days in Town; Frank arranging to come up early in the next month as usual, and to stay over the Derby. They were met in the afternoon by Anderson, at Paddington, and he went with them to Westbourne Terrace; sundry expressions of wonderment escaping Annie even in that short distance, at the height of the houses and the beauty of the squares.

It was the first Monday in May—the opening day at the Academy, and Harry had good news for Nelly; for the pictures he had sent in were both placed, and fairly hung; and one had the red star to it. It was a bit of luck, and mainly due to a final touch or two on Varnishing Day; for the pictures between which it hung were so full of colour that they killed his evening sky, and took the glow out. But perched on the steps, he

soon put matters right, and much improved it; as in position there, he saw exactly what the landscape wanted; his figure-subject also, which he touched. The former, noticed at the Private View, sold when the doors were opened; so Harry's pleasure that day at again seeing Nelly, was considerably increased by his own good fortune.

The evening was spent quietly at the aunts'; and the next morning they all went to the Academy, for a first peep at the pictures; and Nelly felt very proud of Harry, and wondered how many years it would take her to go and do likewise. An evening in the Park, and a couple of hours at a concert, ended the day pleasantly; and gave Annie her first glimpse of London life and fashion, and increased her wonderment considerably. The next day she and Nelly went with Anderson to South Kensington, to look round there—as it was a student's

day—and arrange for the painting; Fred going to Croydon, to spend the day with an old schoolfellow.

"Now, any of the pictures in these five rooms," said Harry, as they entered the first of them, where were several persons painting, "you can copy in oils, but those in the side rooms must be in water-colours, and under special arrangements; with a few exceptions, however, which I will point out presently.

"Where's the 'Horse Fair?'" said Nelly; "I want Annie to see that. Rosa Bonheur's, you know," said she, turning to her; "the one I told you of." "In the end room," said Harry; "but we will take them as we go. We must show your cousin the 'Derby Day.'" "Look, Annie," said Nelly, as they came up to it, "there it is—Frith's. Is it not good?" "Yes," said Annie; "capital. But what a large stand and what a lot of people! Why that's better than Worcester." "I daresay

it is a little bit," said Harry. "Why, they have moved those horses' heads!" "Only to the next room, Nelly. We are coming to them." "Oh, I see; there they are. Look, Annie. Herring's 'Scanty Meal.' What dear old things they look: that one is just like Jack. I'll copy that." "Will you?" said Anderson. "I think a landscape would have been more useful to you; but if you prefer it, then, I will settle down to this one next it—'The Neapolitans,' by Penry Williams. I shall then be near enough to you to tell you what you want." "Thanks," said Nelly; "that will be nice, won't it? I do so love horses that I should prefer it."

"Oh, come along, Annie; there's the 'Horse Fair'—there on the other side;" and as they entered the end room, "what do you think of that?" said she. "But you don't mean to say a lady painted that, Nell?" "I do, though." "Well, she must be clever!

Oh, I say, Nell, isn't that great rearing one just like old Captain? at least he would be if he wasn't white. I've seen him, when they've jibbed him, rear like that." So Nelly laughed at Annie's criticism. "Now," said Anderson, "we will turn into the side rooms to see the Landseers."

"Here, come on, Annie," said Nelly, setting off in advance, as soon as they entered them, "and I'll show you something that you won't forget. There! 'Shoeing the Bay Mare.' If that isn't a first-rate thing, I don't know what is. Just look at her coat, and the gloss on it! as if old Joe had been at work at her for a week. Isn't she a beauty? And that dear old donkey with the poppy, like our Gipsy; and all those parings and odds and ends, and that leathern apron. Why that's just like Burton's. And just look at that anvil too!" "Why, I could catch hold of it!" said Annie. "Of course

you could. Harry, I must do that, I must indeed." "Number two," said he.

"Oh, and that," said she, as she turned round and found the "King Charles's Spaniels" facing her. "Those darling dogs! Oh, I must do those, they are such loves." "Number three," said he. "Yes, and that—no, not that; it will be too large at present." "A trifle so, I fancy," said Harry, as they looked at "The Maid and the Magpie." "Will you say those two as well," said Harry, seeing that her ambition was unbounded—"'Peace' and 'War'?" "No, I don't like 'War'; but those dear little lambs in 'Peace' I certainly must copy. Look at them, Annie, peeping into the cannon." "Number four," said he; and each one you have named you can copy, too, in oil; but not the others in this room, or the next one.

"But shall I have time?" said Nelly. "Scarcely," was the reply. "Suppose we

say one first. Now which shall it be—the horses' heads, or the dogs? This is rather a snug corner; and as they limit the number for these side-rooms, you would be quieter and more to yourself here than in the centre ones. And perhaps," said Harry significantly, "that would be an advantage in some respects, as I could tell you more than if many were by."

"Perhaps it would," said Nelly, whose thoughts were running then alongside his. "Then we will say this, Nell; and we will see Mr. Graves to-morrow." "Mr. Graves?" said Nelly; "I thought it was Mr.—Mr.—" "Wornum. So it is; and we will see him, too, in the morning, at the National. I thought when we were there yesterday at the Academy, we would not stay to do so; but these pictures are copyright, so we must see Mr. Graves as well."

"This lady and myself will be painting

here for a time," said Anderson, as they met with the attendant. "I suppose it will be all right if we leave our easels and canvasses with you?" "Quite, sir," said that gentleman. "There is a room below, where they will be safe; and if you wish it, I will see that they are placed each morning in position for you, so that there will be no time lost when you do come. For most of those you now see painting, I place the easels." "Thanks," said Anderson; "that will be very nice. Three consecutive days a week, I think?" "Yes, sir; from ten till five." "Much obliged. Then I will send the traps across the beginning of the week, and we will have our first turn on Wednesday next. We shall copy the same picture—the King Charles's."

"There will be no difficulty about it, then?" said Nelly. "None whatever; for I know Mr. Wornum, and I have shown him

your pictures, so he is satisfied as to your ability; and as I have also sent a written application to him, giving your name and address, you will be sure to have the ticket when we call. And the same ticket answers for three months for you to copy at the National, as these pictures belong to it; and when we have seen Mr. Graves you will be right, too, for these Landseers."

"Will that free me also to the Art School?" "No," said Anderson; "but it is of no use thinking of that now, because you would not only have to pay for the whole term—five months, and it 'ends with July—but you would also have to undergo a preliminary examination, to prove proficiency."

"But don't they have costume models there?" "Yes," said Harry, "thrice a week, and the same model sits for a fortnight; ten till three—six lessons. But I

should not trouble about models, Nell; you will find quite enough to do without that, and you have lots of good ones in the country. Besides, I have the addresses of any quantity of them—men, women, and children, and of sundry nationalities—who would be only too glad to come to you at their usual figure—two shillings an hour—and any special costume you may require, I can get for you from Bow Street. I know Mercer well, and he will do the thing cheaply."

"They have such good models, though! Don't you remember you pointed out several to me as we came down the Green Park, that morning we went to the Colour Court, to hear the band play? You said they were coming here. They were very picturesque."

"Yes, I remember them, they were Saffron Hill ones—and I also remember, Nell, the tunes that morning that you liked the best.

Oh, yes, there are some of all sorts, just as they are at liberty; and there are hundreds to choose from. I should like you, though, to see one they have now," said Harry; "a friend of mine is at work there—the most beautiful girl I think I ever saw, with deep hazel eyes, and long black glossy hair. She is in a gipsy group, and poses splendidly. There is an old man there, too, who is a magnificent model, and he has the most artistic beard possible—long, white, and flowing—he is her grandfather. They pay them extra, but they are worth the money. They will figure largely at the next Academy.

"There are some Albanian and Neapolitan girls too, very good, very good indeed; they make up so well, and are so full of colour, with their head-gear, and their trinkets and their trappings. But stick to the copying this time, Nell, and then the next time you come to Town, you can perhaps have a turn

there. I had rather just now, if you have the time for it, you tried your hand at 'the round,' at the Museum—the British, you know. I can get you there all right, and they are very good as to taking care of the traps. So they are at the National, in fact, and will have all ready for you, the same as here."

So on the morrow, the necessary steps were taken, and matters put straight for the painting; and as they settled down to it in the ensuing week there, side by side, there were pleasant dreams for Nelly Hamilton.

CHAPTER III.

STERN REALITY.—THE WHISPERED WORDS.

YES, those indeed were then most pleasant dreams for Nelly Hamilton—dreams of the days she spent with him she loved; dreams nightly of the fond words that she heard the while their easels were so close together, when painting side by side. Three days a week, and week to follow week, until the time arrived—the end of June—for him to leave as usual then for Wales. It was certainly the most delightful routine imaginable; and those red-letter days in each week were looked forward to by Miss Nelly most joyously.

At first Annie accompanied her, and stayed there in the gallery reading, or working by them; but as the conversation of two engaged young people is not usually of interest to anyone but themselves, two days of it were quite enough for her. So then the lovers were left alone; and as Miss Kate and Lizzie Wilmot wished her with them, Annie preferred to join them daily in a bit of shopping in Regent Street, Oxford Street, or the Burlington, or in a drive or a walk in the Park, to being "penned up there" half the week amongst the pictures. On those "off" days, as she called them, she did not mind being a bit quiet, as long as she was out of doors; as, when Nelly was not painting at South Kensington, there were lots of places that they went to together, and they were as gay as most people; besides which, "good old Nell" had given up the first week wholly to her, to show her about London,

and she had really already seen very much of it.

Annie and her aunts got on famously together, for she was a bright cheerful girl and a merry rattle; and they showed her all they could, for they enjoyed her company—so much so, indeed, that at the end of the month, when she was soon to have returned to Bickley, Miss Mary Hamilton wrote to her brother Charles that they should keep her longer, and that he must not expect to see her till Frank was back from the Derby. So the little lady was delighted beyond measure at the extension of her visit, for she was now getting to know her way about a bit, and to appreciate more and more that which was to be seen the oftener she did see it.

Her nearness to Kensington Gardens often made her go there, as she had only to turn by St. James's Church into the Terrace, to be there directly. And she was never

tired of doing so, so nice and pleasant did she find it, there, when either alone, or to go part of the way with Nelly, she would start out after breakfast for a good brisk walk; sure of meeting with lots of ladies from the neighbourhood, who, like herself, enjoyed there the freshness of the morning. With some of them she used to have a chatter, when underneath the elms, or in the Temple—a favourite seat with her, to look across the fountains and the lake, to the greensward by the Cottage, which comes so well there with its woodland backing—for there were many there who could see at once that she was a country girl; and they were amused with her child-like enthusiasm, and her primitive remarks. She thought it so nice, too, to be able to go there all alone, and to wander about as other ladies were doing, just as she had been accustomed to stroll out when she was at home.

Her first morning across there—the day they went to South Kensington — amused Nelly greatly. "Why, good gracious!" said Annie, as they went up under the trees to the Memorial, "I did not know there were woods in London." "Nor I," said Nelly. "But this is a wood, Nell, surely, with all these great trees about, and such a lot of rooks? Why, it is just like that lower wood of ours at home; only there don't seem to be any ferns about, or brambles. And oh, look there! why there are sheep, actually. Have they got out of the fields, Nell?" "Not exactly, Annie; they are a long way from the turnips. You won't see any fields about here; but in the wide open spaces in the parks, which you will see by-and-by, and which are as green as our meadows, you will see lots of sheep." "But don't the people steal them?" "No they don't, no one meddles with them; nor will you

find that the persons who are in the parks ever pick the flowers." "Then they can't be such very wicked people here," said Annie, "can they?" So at the rural innocence of sweet eighteen, Nell laughed right heartily.

All the places to which she went surprised her, the Crystal Palace, perhaps, the most; and when the little lady did return to her own country surroundings, it was with a mind considerably enlarged by what she had seen in London; and also with a heart slightly touched by the genuine admiration of a gentleman, who was a few years her senior.

This was Mr. Charles Cameron, of Oxford, the second son of the Mr. Cameron who owned the house by Holland Park, where Harry lived—Harry Anderson. He was a friend of the Wilmots; and when Annie and Nelly went to stay there for a few days, at the Cedars, Brompton, she met him; and

he was one of their party to Hampton Court, where he was very attentive to her when they got lost in the Maze; and where he kept very close to her afterwards, for fear she should get lost again. He was a smart fellow, with plenty to say for himself, and he had a willing listener; for compliments to Annie had been few and far between, the young men in her own country being far too prosaic for pretty speeches.

Mr. Cameron, charmed with the rustic freshness of Annie Hamilton, did not hesitate to tell her as much before she left London; and when she did leave, her heart was considerably the lighter for the information he then gave her; namely, that when Harry Anderson came down in the autumn to his uncle's, he probably should come there too, when he hoped to be able to renew "a most pleasant acquaintance." If her cousin Nelly was unable to understand how people should

prefer Town, when they could live in the country, she had no such wonderment; for she was quite satisfied that she could live there herself—in London—"O, for ever."

But Nelly's own experiences at South Kensington, through those cosy paintings in that cosy corner, went far to modify her extreme opinions; as they gave her a very good inkling of that happy future which she hoped might come when, all in all to each, they would be together; he busy painting, and she watching him; or, anxious to please him, painting also by him.

Those were indeed jolly days. The meeting in the morning by the fountains; the walk from there all under those old trees, so tempting to them to prolong the time; the lulls in work, the confidential chatter when none were by; the energy they showed—absorbed in art—to lookers-on, who came in now and then as visitors; the breaking-off,

mid-day, the rush down-stairs, the merry lunch there in the restaurant. The after-stroll up by the fernery—those dim arcades, where, though ferns abounded in the Eymor woods, she never tired of looking, were he but by: then up again to work, to work and talk; the theme one topic, one that did not tire—and home across the sward, beneath the elms—those grand old elms—to meet again, most likely, in the evening; if not, the morning, to walk, and talk, and tell the tale again.

The jolliest part of it all, was the "master and pupil" light in which the whole thing was regarded by the aunts, in common with the young lady's parents; they not being in the slightest degree behind the scenes, or having the remotest idea of any attachment. But as Anderson was now so well known to all of them, and his uncle, the Rector, had so frequently advised a term in Town for study, as, in all probability, it would be of the greatest

advantage to her, as his nephew would then be able to "advise and instruct her"—he repeating that which "nephew Harry" had so often impressed upon him, that he might repeat it—it seemed perfectly natural to them that Anderson should "so kindly" give up his time for her benefit; and so ungrudgingly linger there in that gallery for three whole days a week, "when really it must be very tedious to him, very tedious indeed." Aunt Sarah and Aunt Mary thought him a very "good" young man, and they were much obliged to him. That ten years between their ages did a deal.

It cannot be said that the painting proceeded rapidly, for the progress was slow; but it was no doubt difficult to hit that wonderful silkiness of coat, and that brilliancy of the eyes, which "those darling dogs" possessed; and the handling of a pupil must, of course, lack the dexterity of a master;

still, there was sufficient on their respective canvasses to "look" like work, were people curious. As the end of the month drew near, however, more progress was made, that Nelly might have "something to show" when Frank came up; therefore, when he did come, he found the King Charles's "on view," and finished; and he was told that the picture of the horses' heads was commenced.

Well, it had to be, and rather sooner than was intended; for one morning a gentleman and two ladies—presumably his daughters—came in, and pitched their easels by them, to copy the same picture, the larger Landseer, the "Maid and Magpie;" so that more work and less chatter became a necessity. And as the chief charm of their snug corner from that time vanished, and they found that the centre room had not an occupant, they gladly exchanged corners and went there, and began to copy "The Scanty Meal;" Nelly being

specially anxious to closely imitate the one like "Jack." Harry, giving up his intentions as to the Williams' picture—the "Neapolitans"—decided also to go in for the Herring; so the two easels were again together, and Nelly was very happy; for they continued to talk of what had been in the past, and what was to be in the future. It was very nice there, and their very position, bending at the easel, enabled each of them to talk together without being overheard; and they had a very great deal, too, to talk about.

That meeting in the wood, that naughty pony, that welcome shower, and that noisy bird. That shed—first picture—and those pleasant days; that jolly gallop back across the meadows, that lucky fall, and also that first kiss! That view, that pine wood, and that path of colour, up the hill-side, to those wide-spreading yews; the "Mr." Anderson, the tale of love, the warm waist-pressure, and

the declaration; the mutual promise, mutual happiness. The secret kept, the meeting at the Ball, the ferns, the dim light, and the stolen kiss—all pleasant recollections of the past, that called up visions of a happy future.

Certainly, for the speedy furtherance of Art belongings—spell the word which way you may—those "students' days" are useful institutions, as the writer of these present lines can truly testify; and they can be strongly recommended to the notice of any gentleman whose lady-love is gifted with artistic tendencies, as, with the facilities there afforded, a decided progress is soon made; for, as the subject is pursued, the "general tone" improves, and a more "tender feeling" is then made manifest; and, with an increased "warmth of treatment" and a "bolder touch," "freer handling" is acquired; "harmony" ensues, and a desirable result is

obtained. For all Art matters, there are few better places than South Kensington, especially when those who are engaged—or wish to be—can be quite free from interruption.

Frank, who could not this time have Harry for his companion, was again by the Ride or lounging by the Row, and doing sight-seeing on his own account, and gadding out with Annie, whose brother, Fred, had come back home delighted with his short "out." In the evenings, however, Frank took Nelly and Annie to a good many of the theatres, and Harry on several occasions accompanied them, which, as Nelly truly said, was "very jolly," as it gave them "a beau" apiece; but as her own brother could not well come under that designation with respect to herself, she, of course, paired off with Harry, to their mutual satisfaction; and Frank's journeys from the "Golden Cross" to Bayswater had to be very

frequent. As he had promised to return home when the Derby was over, Brighton had to be visited; so on the second Saturday that he was in Town they went there, and they remained at Brunswick Square until the Tuesday evening.

It was Annie's first sight of the sea, and as they went about with Frank and saw all that they could see, and strolled about the beach, and went upon the pier, to hear the band each evening they were there, she was considerably delighted; and she thought that next to living in London, she should like to live there. As her aunt Jane was, for a wonder, very well, and the Doctor not then busy, their brief visit was a most pleasant one. If Miss Annie could have had her way, she would have been upon the beach all day, to see the waves roll in, and watch the sea-gulls; but, although she was amused at the bathers who were bobbing about

there, she would not accept Nell's challenge for a dip—"just for the fun of the thing, you know"—as, though the ladies had those long blue "gowns," so many "looking on" seemed rather shocking; so unsophisticated Annie did not bathe, which afterwards she very much regretted.

The last evening they were on the pier, the moon was at the full; and, as they sat there, listening to the band, and looking at the white light on the water, thoughts of twelve months ago came back to Nelly; when she sat there with Frank, in that same spot, and knew not then, as she still knew not now, that Harry was behind with Jessie Lawson. Frank teased her then; how he would tease her now, did he but know! Well, the year gone by had been a happy one; the year now come to her would be still happier, for, loved by him whom she so truly loved, all things seemed bright before

her, as Harry soon would make his own love known, and further secrecy would not be needed. Proud of his love for her, her love for him, she wished the day were come when she might own it.

The day after they returned from Brighton was the Derby Day; and as Frank was going with a lot of fellows he knew, Anderson begged off, as also on the Friday, so that the painting "lessons" should not be interrupted. "An excellent young man, that he is," said the aunts; "so self-denying."

On those three days the work was pushed forward; and as Nelly was a rapid painter, the horses' heads were finished just in time. So when Frank came back from the races on the Friday evening, Nelly proceeded to unscrew a large flat wooden box that was in the corner, and saying, "Now you must not touch, it's wet;" took out the canvass and showed it him. "Ah, that's not your

as preventing them and Nelly from feeling dull, through losing the company of Frank and Annie.

The invitation was accepted, and in a few days Miss Mitchell arrived. She was a nice girl, and about Nelly's own age, and they took to each other from the first. With his cousin a visitor there, Harry's own visits were necessarily more frequent; but as the end of the month arrived, the time came for his departure, as, besides making studies for his next pictures, he wanted to paint two small ones for the Dudley, which would have to be sent in by the end of September. He had always left town in May, after the opening of the Academy—his other picture there had just been sold—but this time he had remained, as he promised he would, if Nelly could come up to her aunts' for a stay there; but now, as time was getting on, the necessity of getting forward with his

pictures obliged him to start for Wales, which he did reluctantly.

Before going, however, he thought that, as the horses' heads were finished, and it might be dull for Nelly at South Kensington after he left, it would be as well were she to have a turn at the National; and, as there was an old lady and her niece, friends of his, who were then painting there, he had the traps removed and taken to the Square; to be ready for the next Thursday and Friday, so as to lose no time.

Going there with her to introduce her to them—Miss Ward and Mrs. Dudley—he found them in the large room at their easels; and, as they were busy copying two pictures by Gainsborough—"The Parish Clerk" and "Cottage Children"—he settled her down by them, to make a reduced copy of Constable's "Corn-field," which hung there between the Gainsboroughs; and he re-

mained with her to show her how to proceed, and to enjoy her company. The next day he again met her there, and stayed with her until the evening, when they parted with mutual protestations of affection, and with the hope of again meeting in the country; he arranging to return from Wales by way of Ludlow, where he wanted to sketch a famous bit of old timber work, the front of "The Feathers" Inn, and so to Eymor; when he would ask papa, and "settle" it.

It so happened, however, that the next morning, Saturday, his cousin bethought herself, at the last moment, of something she wanted to say to him. So, knowing it was chance work her finding him at home, she decided to call in at the studio, thinking she might there meet with him; as he was not going till the afternoon, and he would be sure to call there on his road for his traps and his easel.

"Are you going to town to-day, Miss Hamilton?" said Miss Mitchell. "Only to the Burlington," said Nelly, "to see if they have done my brooch, as they promised it for the fifth, which is to-day. Why?" "I thought," was the reply, "if it would not be taking you out of your way, whether you would mind looking in at North Audley Street as you return, on the chance of finding me there. I may or I may not be there. I just want a word with Harry, but if he is not in, I shall not wait, as I can write to him."

"Very well," said Nelly, only too glad of the chance of again seeing him, "I'll do so. I dare say it will be towards two o'clock." "Thanks; then we can come down the Park together; but you won't mind if we miss of each other?" "Oh, no," said Nelly, hoping they might do so, that she might have him all to her very own self; "don't you wait a

moment, because I might perhaps be kept, and then I should not call." So the two friends parted.

But Nelly did not mean to be kept if she could help it; and when she found that the brooch was not finished, the shopkeeper was agreeably surprised to find how well she took it, as she did not stay a minute. The "towards two," for North Audley Street, was one, however, for the clock struck just as she got there.

"Well, Mrs. Leonard," said she, as the landlady came to the door, "is Mr. Anderson in?" "Yes, miss," was the reply, "you will find him up-stairs." "No one with him, is there?" "Only his young lady, miss, and I think she's going." "Oh," said Nelly; and "done" thought she, as she went upstairs; "that is provoking! Miss Mitchell would have started had I not hurried."

Harry's sanctum was on the upper landing, for the sake of an uninterrupted north light for his studio, which opened out of his sitting-room. Beyond it, and communicating with it, was the dressing-room for his models, at the top of the back-stairs, and to which access was obtained from the street by the side door in the passage. His own room was therefore rendered quite private for himself and his friends, or any callers he might have there. Nelly tapped at the door, and then, as no one was there but Miss Mitchell, she opened it.

The room was empty, the studio door ajar, and the green-baize curtain up, or pushed aside. Two voices there in earnest conversation — the one a lady's and the other Harry's; and the lady's voice she knew was not Miss Mitchell's. She turned to go downstairs to stay awhile until his lady visitor had left, annoyed to think she had not waited

when she gently tapped. One minute more, and much had then been spared her.

Her hand was on the door to pull it to; she stopped and started! Her colour came and went; she then bent forward: moved on thence step by step into the room, and stood there. She had caught these whispered words: "My own dear Harry; think of our baby boy—our last, our loved one!"

A woman's sobs then came to her, and his voice—his! which said these stinging words: "Don't cry now, Jenny; let what will happen, I shall be your friend—for old times' sake."

That hit her at the heart, she heard no more; the room went round with her; she clutched the nearest chair and dropped down on it, and by the greatest effort kept her senses.

She heard them part; he came—"Ah! you here, Nell? This is a kind surprise.

I never heard you. Come for a last good-bye, another kiss, eh darling?" and Harry's arm stole under her brown curls to lift her lips to his.

"Yes, Harry, yes," said she, as she removed it, and rose up hastily; "a last good-bye, for it must be for ever!"

"Oh, you delicious little actress, how well you do it!" and Harry laughed, and caught her round the waist. "Yes, it will, as you say, be the last to all 'behind the scenes,' when—give me a kiss, you darling—I've asked papa. It will all be over then with secrecy."

Nell flung him from her with "'Behind the scenes!' Yes, I have had a glimpse."

"Why, Nell, what is it! are you mad, or what; or only acting? If acting, pray go on, 'tis excellent; if real, pray speak out, I'm listening."

"And so was I—compelled to do so, most

unwillingly. You smile, you need not, for I am here by chance, to meet your cousin. I asked if you were in — the answer, 'Yes.' Were you alone? No one but 'your young lady.' I thought she meant Miss Mitchell; I tapped and entered. I found you were engaged, and heard you talking; and lest it might be private, left the room, to wait down-stairs until the lady left you. My hand was on the door, I was there, outside; I heard endearing words from her to you; I stopped, then entered — you would have done the same—I heard your answer."

"The cloud's dispelled, the sun shines forth again. Well, this is good! And so you're really jealous of my model? Why, you little puss, how can you be so silly! You'll break your heart, you will, when you're my wife. Oh, Nell, you funny girl! Come, there now, kiss me!"

But she drew back, and said indignantly,

"Do artists usually, then, love their models?"

"Not that I am aware of," he answered; "nor do I love mine."

"You can, then, perhaps explain the words I heard?"

"No, I can't, Nell," said Harry, nettled, "not now at least; nor do I think there is any cause for explanation."

"You can scarcely think what passed between you, there, consistent with our mutual relations? I must have all your love or none.—But you surely can explain it; I know you can. Harry! why don't you speak and tell me all about her, and why she will always have a friend in you 'for old times sake,' and that too 'let what will happen'?"

"Because I cannot. I will do so some time, but I cannot now. Nell, trust me! There is nothing in it, nothing. To tell you part will need the telling all; and that,

without her leave, I cannot do. To man or woman, my word's always sacred. Come, sit you down now, Nell, and don't be foolish: come, do. For goodness' sake, don't let us part bad friends. I'll tell you some time. Shake hands, and let's forget it."

"Tell me now!"

"I have told you, Nell, I cannot—not at present. Wait till I have seen her; then I'll tell you all."

"Oh, Harry! you cannot mean it. Say that you're teasing—only trying me. You knew—I know you did—that I was there? Dear Harry, tell me, do; don't try me so! You know I like you, love you; only say so.

"No word? Oh, Harry! Not many hours ago we parted happily—parted with vows of love and constancy; full of that future that then seemed before us—nay, hear me, Harry!—full of that time when I should be your wife; when we should be, aye, all in all to

each. Yet now your word to her outweighs your faith to me."

"But Nelly, hear me out!"

"Speak then. You're silent! I know I'm trusting — I know I'm simple-hearted, but self-respect must now end all between us."

"Nell! don't go on so. If you'll but wait awhile, you shall know it all. You wrong me—you do indeed. Now trust me, Nell."

"Then tell me now, what meant those words I heard? What is that girl to you? Why are you, and why shall you be her friend, always, and 'come what will;' single or married—aye, if I'm your wife? Yes, tell me that!

"You cannot? Then, farewell! The dream is over—passed, and gone at last. Oh, what an ending to our happy time! Farewell, farewell!"

She touched his hand, then hurried from the room.

"Oh, Harry, Harry, you have been so kind, I cannot leave you thus!" said she, returning. "One kiss—the last that you must ever have from me—there! God forgive you!" and, rushing from him, he was left alone—alone to realise the love thus lost—as pure a love as ever man could have.

CHAPTER IV.

UPPERTON-ON-THE-HILL—LEWIS OF LONGLANDS.

"How long ool this here dinner be, landlord, afore it be raddy?" said Jacky Cobb, the cobbler. "Half an hour, good," was the answer. "Thin I purpose as how the band giz us summut while us waaits; summut apper—appery——"

"—Po," said Penn, the parish clerk, who always hit the right word when it was wanted. So the "band," which on this occasion consisted only of harp, fiddle, and cornet, as the society's funds were low, at once gathered themselves together, and went into it; and

the appropriate strains of "There's a good time coming, boys; but wait a little longer," soon centralized the attention of the villagers; and withdrew out of the cooks' way those anticipatory individuals who, congregated in the big kitchen, were getting visibly convulsed about the mouth when hot coals made the gravy fizz; for the joints were large and juicy.

It was the seventh of July, the second Monday after Midsummer, and the usual day of the feast at Upperton—the feast at the "Crowing Cock"—not the great feast of the Odd Fellows, when they all went to church there in procession, with two big flags and a little one, and a "real" band, to play them in and play them out again, and take them round the parish—but a little local "do," a minor matter: the annual dinner of the sick society there—the "United Brothers;" who considered that in that healthy locality, four

and fourpence per head would suffice to cover all cost of time, trouble, and physic which their respective ailments would require from January to December; and that their doctor, Mr. Burt, had decidedly the best of the bargain, when, to prevent another practitioner poaching on his preserves, he unwillingly took to it.

The Society, originally a large one, was, however, rapidly decreasing, from sheer healthiness of its members, who did not see the use of paying for a doctor unless they could be ill "rasonably offen," or "mate wi' accidence;" and the total number now was less than forty. At the "great dinner," the squire, the doctor, and the farmers dined with them—the Odd Fellows—as there was an element of civilization in the affair; but this particular dinner, unless the doctor looked in for an hour or two, to respond to questions, was seldom honoured with more "honorary"

members than a few friends from Eymor. Out of friendship to their brothers on the hill, that low-lying hamlet generally sent a deputation of five, as representing the parish generally; as comprised in its usual division of "the common lot, the hop-yard set, the quarry folks, the wood people, and the villagers." Gould, the thresher; Potts, the mowing man; Jem, the fisherman; Aaron, the mole-man; and Byfield, the pig-killer, were therefore amongst the company; Jem critically commenting on the fiddler's capabilities, and the rest humming to the tune.

"Now lads it ba—"

"Coming," said the clerk, who always helped out Tom Starling's son, who stuttered horribly when he got to his last word.

"An the smal on it ba—"

"Good," said Penn. "Now take your seat, boy, take your seat," he continued, as the great gawky showed a disposition to be all

over the place, "or you'll be done out of it." "Who's the cutter-up?" said Aaron. "The pig-killer," said Jem. "Then, Byfield, will you say grace?" was the clerk's request, who of course knew what was proper, and manners, too. "A ool," said Byfield. "Blass the Lord!" and down they sat.

"Maly pays," said Simkins. "Um be," said Towler. "A loikes pays, an granes, an taturs—a loikes um all, a does. Pass the salt, an a pinch o' pepper." "Proime bif—good cut—graavy in him," remarks Orton. "Ought to be," replies Ockerhead, "Sir Francis fad him." "Fill hup, an pass the cy-der; ul hev ma yale wi' chays; it ool rallish wi' the sallet," said Wilkes the woodman. "Is," responded Turbill, "it be a drap o' good."

"Getting on all right there, Byfield?" said the clerk, who faced him. "Shall be," said he, "when a done a cuttin; but they be ta

quick on ma, it, darn em! Take it asy now, boys, a bit, an giv I a chance, or ul 'collop' yer. A oona slice it not no moore. Yer bin most alarmin fast at it, yer be. Yer bin a saavin hup fur it, a knows. Be asy now, be asy, an gie Penn a turn, whoile a ates. A shanna git a bit else afore it be cowld. Houd thee plaate thin," said he, as Biggs implored for "graavy." "Theer, thin. Now a oona sarve not no moore, not it awhoile, no I oona;" and with that he, in the most decisive manner possible, put the cover on.

So while he is left to commence his meal in peace, we will look round at the locality.

Upperton—or, to give it its full title, Upperton-on-the-Hill—was a long straggling village of one street, and it took precedence of Eymor-in-the-Valley, not only by its containing three shops and four public-houses—the "Rampant Lamb," the "Spotted Dog," the "Shepherd's Rest," and the "Crowing Cock," or

rather three and an inn, for the latter claimed that title—but also because within the memory of its old people it had once been a town; as was clearly indicated by the terminal word "street" that was still attached to the name of each road which led out of it. Fairs, too, had been held there, and Courts-leet; and the Cock claimed for the latter.

For the most part, the village consisted of old half-timbered houses, black-and-white and brown-and-white, low and squat; but a few larger ones, of good red brick—the doctor's, the road-surveyor's, the school-house, and the draper's—redeemed it from monotony; while the Rectory, a large house of white stone, on the one side, well set back in greenery, and the villa residence of the Squire on the other, gave an air of some importance to the place, and a picturesque entrance to the village.

The blacksmith's forge was at the one end, and the pound was at the other; and on the roadside pool by it the ducks were duly pelted; as the juveniles of that quarter had always stones in their pockets, and they were indiscriminate in their attentions, from tom-cats to titmice.

Mr. Burt, as we have seen, was the doctor, and the Rev. Martin Murray was the rector. The former was much liked, but the latter was not, his whole thoughts being concentrated on himself and on the importance of his office. He had a high appreciation of class, and the privileges of society; and, thanking God he was not as other men, he did not demean himself by further intercourse with those around him than his calling compelled. So far as spiritual advice went, his parishioners were welcome to it—he was paid for it; but as to any claims on his pocket—well, he always kept it buttoned.

For he considered if he dressed them over pretty smartly for twenty minutes on a Sunday—one service—and gave them a look-in occasionally at their cottages—when, if there was anything in the pot, it did not escape comment, or even actual observation by the lifting of the lid—he had amply done his duty, and that no more could be required of him. Self-reliance and respect to superiors was his creed; and they who required relief, or who omitted a tug of the forelock and a scrape of the foot as they passed him, heard of it.

Mrs. Murray was not, however, by any means a bad sort of person, but she was so constantly sat upon by the greater weight of her husband's intellect, that her better feelings were never allowed fair play; and it was a bad day for her when she so kindly assisted Jessie Lawson to maintain herself, by procuring for her the post at Mrs. Ches-

sleton's. "You cannot, my dear, keep such persons at too great a distance," said the Reverend Martin, "for if you once approach them, they are sure to take liberties."

Applepatch, the farm where Lawson lived, until it was destroyed that night by fire, was to the left of the village, and the farm-house and buildings had been re-erected. Near to it was another farm, Greenhill—and some workmen's cottages. To the right of Upperton were several farms, and some more cottages, as also beyond it, where the main road, leading to the downs, went on to Bromyard.

It was at one of these farms—Longlands—where John Lewis had lived; and it was only recently, through his gross neglect of it, and his bad farming, that it had come into cultivation. The suspicion under which he lay, however, with regard to the fire, made him shunned by the whole parish;

and as no one would trust him in consequence of it, or have anything more to do with him, twelve months after that his landlord turned him out. He then, with what little money he had, joined some drovers, in buying and selling sheep and pigs and cattle; but failing at that, he took to horse dealing, or "coping," as they called it; and he ultimately joined some gipsies, as their business man; he being a good judge of a horse, and a smart rider.

Where he was at the present time no one knew; and as Moss was discreet, it had never come out that he had been caught by him that night, or rather by Lawson, in the long stubble at Eymor.

"Now thin," said the pig-killer, when he and the rest had done their part at the eatables, "han yer all had enough?" "Welly noigh full;" "Conna hoide no moore;" "Buttons toight," were the responses. "Thin

up-standin plase, all on yer, whoile a saays Graace arter mate—'Blass the Lord!' "

"Poipes, landlord," was the order; and the pipes were brought in, and they at once proceeded to business, by having the books out; while the "band" stationed outside, gave them another tune—"The Roast Beef of Old England."

After the statistics for the year had been duly read out by the clerk, who was secretary, the cases of some of the absent Brothers were gone into, and commented on.

"Now there's that old crippledy Krimpett; what about him?" said Penn. "A votes us haves him hoff the box, immajutly," said Bowcutt; "heen bin hon him ten wakes, an uz a sham-Abram, an a maake-belave; that's whaat a be." "Youm roight theer," replied Pratt, "as I knows on; for a sid 'm the tother marnin, agwain up the medder ta the doctor's, as jimmy as a two-year-old—not

a spavin, nor a splint, nor a curb about him —but the moment a wan gotten through the wicket inta the garding, oh, daynt he howl! Lor, a wan tookd so bad, all at oonst loike, and a went hup ta the doore as laame as a cat! Now, ef heen gotten the lumbaygo, I got it. Uz a bad un." "Scrot his naame out thin," said Benbow, "a mun goo ta work; uz a robbin honest men."

"And this Tom Plum," said Penn, "what's to be done with him? He lies a-bed and lies a-bed, and still keeps on the box." "Git the doctor stop the pappermint, an gie him summat groipin," was Moore's suggestion. "As lang as a waarms his stomach o' thatawaay an coomforts him, ul niver come out on it."

"And Perks, he's another doubtful customer?" "Oh the doctor's sattled him a has, an tould 'm plaain. Uz fund 'm hout. A axed im if the madsun had sich an sich a

haffec, an a sad a had, an werry much so; an—as a touched 'm hover—ef a had a paain here, and a paain theer; an a sad 'horful,' 'an it war past all bearin!' 'Thin,' saays the doctor, 'you come out o' that; theer's no madsun as I knows on, ood do the loikes to yer; an theer inna no disase as be it inwented, as ood saarve yer hout o'thatawaay. So yer sis a had 'm. Scrot him hout!"

"What about Mike Daley, him with the colic? four weeks he's been on now, and he vows he's no better." "That bin wrang, as I knows on," said William Ford; "an'll tell yer how a knows. Oud Betty Burnitt—as lives anigh us—hur wan a saayin how koind a wan, in gieing hur his stuff to rub hur leg ooth; an as how hur wan batter aready." "Why, the stupid old woman," said Penn, "it was not for outward use!" "So atelda," said Ford, "but

hur said, whaat wan good fur the innards, wan good fur thun outards."

Sundry other cases were then gone into, when, as the clerk closed the book, he asked if anyone had got to say "anything against the doctor?" which inquiry, from the very absurdity of it, caused a general laugh; the doctor being a great favourite with all of them.

But as the clerk sat down, up jumped Starling, "A—a—I has," said he, "a usen ta ba—ba——"

"Bandage, bind, blister, bleed?"

"Bleed," said Tom, taking up the right word from Penn, "when a axed im, but a oona neow; nor ka—ka——"

"Come, call, cut, cup?"

"Cup," said Tom, "that's him; a oona cup ma; an a usen ta loike ta hear that brass thing goo 'click!' when a putt it inta ma neck, an maaide ma yud bob." "Cupping

and bleeding are gone out o' fashion, boy. Rest you quiet," said the clerk. "Thin ul hev a tooth out," said Tom, determined to have at least something tangible for his four and fourpence. "Do," said Penn, "and then you'll talk the better. Your teeth bother your tongue."

"A shood a' thought the doctor ood ha gid us a look in ba this toime," said Fisher.

"A mat'm," said Dyer, "agwain ta the Union as I come, is a did, ta see some faller. Ud gotten his legs hurt, a sad."

"A oonder whather ul cut'm hoff," said Hubbins. "One on em a maay; but not both. That ood be more nor his plaaice be worth, that ood." "Why?" said Penn. "Whoy? whoy ecos the Gardins oodna stan two ooden legs fur one mon, ood em? a puttin the payrish ta hexpense. Not loikely. A moight fur two, though, ef they wan druv ta it, but not fur one."

"Then now, Mr. Chairman," said Penn, "as I think that's all the business, what do you say to having the band in, and starting a song or two?" "Conna do batter," said Byfield. "A got a chap or two here as con gie you summut; eh, Jem? an you, Aaron, darn thee oud body." "The Brothers fust," said Jem, politely; "a defers ta they. Arter ween shoun'm respec, a ool; an ool gie you a tune, too; a brought ma fiddle ooth ma. No offence ta you though," said Jem, addressing himself to the professional, who was tightening up for a scrape when they started. "Not a haporth," said that individual; "go ahead."

"Houd you hard a bit," said Byfield, "an ween hev the cans filled; thin ull goo hat it."

So the cans were filled, pipes lit, and songs were started; Jem's fiddle, and the three instruments of the "band," making the time go merrily; as well as delighting the wives

and sweethearts, who, having left work "an' claned theersels," were now seated round the room, to have their share of the festivities.

"Well, my men, hard on, eh? Glad to find you enjoying yourselves; and you women too. Glorious day," said the doctor, mopping his face as he entered, "but hot enough. Sorry I could not join you before; but a case detained me. Any ale about?" "Oceans," said the pig-killer, "an cy-der, sur." "Then I'll have some, Byfield. Taken stock, Penn?" "Yes, sir," said the clerk; "and there'll be some to be scratched off, I think, sir." "A good many ought to be," was the reply, "for a smart week's work would do them far more good than physic."

"Bad case, sir?" enquired the landlord, who came in with a jug of his "particular good" for the doctor. "Yes, Gill, very bad; both legs crushed. He's dead—died from hæmorrhage: no hope from the first. They

ought not to have moved him: they should have got the doctor of the parish there to have seen to him. The man bled to death." "Who was he, sir?" "A tramp: got drunk, staggered against a wagon, and the wheel went over him.

"But I have something to tell you about him," said the doctor, as he took a pull at the "particular," and set his glass down; "and what I want all of you to hear, in justice to one to whom injustice was done.

"You remember that fire at Applepatch, when poor Lawson was burnt out, and we all ran up the village to help at it?" "We do," said they, as with one voice; "an the mon as did it—that John Lewis o' Longlands." "Then he didn't," said the doctor; "for the man who fired the ricks was the man just dead."

"Niver, sur?" was the exclamation. "Yes," said Mr. Burt. "When he found he was

bound to go, he confessed it. He begged for work, then bread, but Lawson drove him, with hard words, too; and so he fired the place." "Darn his oud body, sur!" was Byfield's comment. "So, if you know where Lewis is, my men, pray tell him," said the doctor; "and make it known, as I shall."

CHAPTER V.

THE ENCOUNTER.—BARBARA LOVELL, THE GIPSY BEAUTY.

How Nelly reached home after that farewell kiss, she scarcely knew. She had a dim idea of being in the Park, and that there she sat, in a side shady walk, almost alone, till something roused her; that Jane, the housemaid, said they all were out, and that she, on plea of headache, gained her room—for there she was, thinking of that one thing, she did remember; the perfidy of him she loved so well, the hopes destroyed, those dreams that now were over. Yes, there she sat, with both hands clasped, her eyes upon the ground, and

fixed there, vacantly—no tear, no sob; naught but a feeling of most utter sadness, and racking headache.

Could such a change be real, was it true? There must be something wrong, some strange mistake. He never surely could have used her so, intentionally; he who, so good and kind, had been so friendly! It was to try her, it surely was to try her; she felt it must be so. False? Oh, no, he could not be—not false to her! She could not, would not think of him so badly. She knew he loved her, and must love her still. It was to test her love that he so tried her. Oh, she would go to him—would see him, soon; it would then be right. There must be some mistake. She had been too hasty; he was piqued, and hurt. Yes, she would see him, and say, "I was wrong; I am still your own dear Nell. Forgive me, Harry!"

Go? He had gone! was on his way to

Wales; where there, no mention. To "many places" there, was all she knew; gone, and without address, as no arrangement had been made to write, lest the aunts might see the letter. Too late to see him, and too late to write! His cousin, she might know, but how to ask her; how have a letter from him, if she wrote, without her aunts, if they once saw it, knowing then their secret? That she would risk, for write she must and would. She would ask Miss Mitchell, and would chance the rest.

But then those words, "dear Harry," from another; those other words, those stinging words that came; what could they mean? Those surely were beyond a test of love, a trick! That girl who said them, too—yes, what was she to him—to him, her own; his model? Scarcely. Those words were words of love—love on both sides; words heard distinctly by her to whom he had so pledged

his love; words full of meaning, and a shameful one, that showed, before he had gained her love, a long love there—those tell-tale words, "our last, our loved one!"

She wondered how she could sit there so calmly; she wondered why it did not break her heart—a blow like that, a blow that was so sudden! She sat, and wondered as she sat, at her own self, bearing her burden there without one tear!

Her tears had yet to come; they would be natural, that calm was not—her throbbing temples showed that pretty plainly. She still sat there, with listless manner, and with downcast looks; dry-eyed, and mute. At length she got up, and she paced the room, her hands clasped tightly close behind her head. Then sat again, and swayed from side to side, and once more paced about; her hands still clasped, but now her bosom heaving, with

that emotion which at last was coming. A little sob or two, and then came tears—most welcome tears; and, with one heartbroken cry of "Harry, Harry! oh, my lost, lost Love!" she fell face downwards on her bed, and cried there, bitterly.

Her tears came none too soon, to give relief to heart and brain. The blow was great, too great for tears at will; but, now that fount was opened, sorrow lessened; and blank despair gave way to deep regret, shown by her sobbing as she still lay there. Two hours and more had passed; the servant tapped—"Yes, Jane!" "Miss Mitchell hopes you are better miss, and sends some tea. She says, please miss, the ladies won't be long." "Please put it down, and thank her Jane—I'm better." That roused her up—the girl departing, she took in the tea, lay down awhile, then bathed her face and eyes; and at six o'clock was with her aunts at

dinner; outwardly cheerful, but inwardly most sad.

A crying night was hers; a night of many thoughts, and little sleep till early morning, and then, tired out, she slept, till St. James's bells, hard by, called all to church. Her aunts, told of her headache, had let her still sleep on; so Jane brought up her breakfast, and she dressed at leisure. The blow was lessening; but what had yet to come was constant thought—thoughts of the past and present—thoughts that would not be turned, try how she may.

A quiet day, and with more sleep, she mended. Miss Mitchell told her that she did not call as she intended in North Audley Street, for she was late, and so she knew that Harry would be gone. "Did he say, Miss Hamilton, where he was first going to?" "No," said Nelly; "he did not, nor did I think to ask him." "I wish you had. However, as I

shall be returning to Reading to-morrow, I daresay I shall hear there from him in a day or two, and that will do. I fancy, though, he meant to go to Bettwys. If so, he is at the 'Oak;' he always stays there when they are not full; though 'Bettwys' only, would be sure to find him, he is so well known there."

So on that information Nelly wrote; the letter one of passionate appeal, unsaying all she said. "Would he forgive her; forget it all, and be again firm friends?" She would read it once again, and post it on the morrow. The scene came to her that night in her dreams; she heard those words once more, and woke up crying.

No, she would not plead to him; how could she do it after such words as those? It did not seem maidenly, nor was it modest. The letter should not go. She ripped it up, and burned it every bit. If he wrote, well; and

if not, she must bear it, for explanation which was due to her must come from him. The postman came each day, but still no letter; but she saw it now—he would not send for fear: she should hear through Clara. Yes; that was safe enough, as she knew all; the only one who did know except Annie. Another day or two would bring good news; and say it all was merely make-believe, and only teasing—to test her love before he went away.

Poor girl! she could not see, were any testing needed, that no man thus would test the girl he loved. She caught at straws, and hoped against all hope.

But Clara's letter came, crossed and re-crossed, as was the one before it; but not one word from Harry; nothing but parish news and village gossip; the invalids, the old folks, and the cottagers. What made it worse, a postscript said, "I heard to-day from

Harry. He is still in Wales. He says that he will be too busy to come here in the autumn." No message, no remark—that, nothing more! Well, she must bear it, and also bear it there, for she had no excuse to leave for some time yet.

But to still thought, she must work, and work she did; for as her painting now was but two days a week, she bought a block; and going back again to Kensington, she spent the rest of the week there, in making studies just in black and white, from different pictures; although exposed to the comments and the peepings of the people, on those free days. It occupied her time, and kept her from her aunts, and so saved questionings; for they had already noticed her change of look and manner; and as they attributed it to over work, they would only consent to her again going to the Galleries, by her promising to be back each evening early; and

soon enough to go with them for a drive. That turn or two round the Park each evening did her good; as the rattle, and the gaiety, and the fashion there, changed her thoughts, at least while she was there; and the fresh air put some colour into her cheeks, which now they needed.

"I'll tell you what, Nell," said her aunt Mary, "if you don't soon look better, we must go down to Brighton for a week or two, and take some rooms there. You are losing all your looks, my girl. You stick to work too closely." But as being alone with them, all day and every day, did not just then suit her, she promised to take the work more quietly; and she made up her mind, lest she should have to go, that she would do all she could to try to cease fretting; but it was easier said than done.

The days she was at work at the "Cornfield," however, were of use to her, for she

found the company of her fellow-workers at the National, pleasant and instructive; and they were both most kind to her; and they made her accompany them each day to Charing Cross, when they left for lunch. Mrs. Dudley—a lady whose hair was grey—had been at the Gallery for many years, and she made an income by it, as, being a careful and a clever copyist, she could get her five or six guineas each for reduced copies—a sum which many other ladies also gained who worked there regularly; and her niece, Miss Ward, was also earning money, and would have, though it was but of small size, two guineas for "The Cottagers." Mrs. Dudley's copy of "The Clerk" was of larger size than usual, and she would receive eight guineas for it when finished; so Nelly saw that genuine talent could be marketed.

With hints from them she got on very well; and Miss Ward introduced her to her

younger sister, Miss Ada Ward, who had been for some time in the Life Class at South Kensington, and who was getting on well.

Three weeks had now elapsed since Anderson had left for Wales; and in another three weeks—as it would then be the middle of August—Nelly would return to Eymor; not with that joyful anticipation of an early meeting with Harry, as she had expected—when his love for her would be confessed, and her love too—but with feelings of sorrow and sadness; with her own hopes shattered and her own love lost, for no word had come from him since that sad day! At times she still hoped on, and then despaired, for that message to his cousin told a tale—he should be "too busy to come there in the autumn."

Would he come at Christmas, then, to them, as he told Frank? It was scarcely likely, now she had cast him off. But when he

came—as he must come some time, to see his uncle—how would he meet her then, and meet them, too, such friends as they had been; and what could she say to Clara, to whom she had told her love; what but —aye, tell her?

Perhaps through her though, all might yet be right. She was a friend, she knew. She would—she would let her know. But how tell her without exposing him?—him whom she loved—still loved, in spite of all!

No, she must trust to time; to time and chance, for how to act she knew not; but until she knew the worst, the very worst, she would still hope on; for she felt she could forgive him for the past, if only he would be true for the future—so great is love when woman loves sincerely. But Nelly's trial was not yet quite over.

One evening, as it was wet—it was the end of the month—she was coming home from

Kensington in a cab, deep in sad thought, as usual; when just as it was turning out of the Uxbridge Road for Bayswater, she was startled by a stoppage and a scream! A well-dressed girl was knocked down by the cab, and lay there hurt. A crowd collected; Nelly jumped out quickly, asked where she lived, and helped her in the cab. "Turn round, and drive us on to Notting Hill," said she; "to Devonshire Terrace, first street past Pembridge Gardens; the right hand side, the first house in the corner, just past the shops. And drive us quietly; this person's hurt, you very stupid man!"

"It was no fault of mine," said the cabman; "I couldn't help it. She crossed as we came, and the horse knocked her over." "It was my own fault, miss," said the injured one; "I had my umbrella up, and I did not see it." "Well, I am very sorry, for I fear you're hurt; but I will see to you. I hope

it is but a twist, and no bones broken." "I hope so too, miss, but it's very painful; my ankle and my wrist. It's kind of you to see me home in this way, it's very kind."

The cab stopped at the door, they helped her out. A woman came. "Oh dear!—Miss Lovell, whatever is the matter?" "I am hurt," said she. "Liz, bring a chair—now cabman you must help; we'll carry her." They took her upstairs, and then Nelly followed. When they had laid her on the bed, and came to see to her, they had to cut her boot off, her foot was swollen. "We must have a doctor," Nelly said; "I'll pay him. Will you send, now please, and get him to come directly? I fear the leg is broken." "Oh no, miss, it isn't," said the patient, "for I put it to the ground when you helped me out, so please don't send. I am sure it is but a sprain."

But it was a bad one, if it was only that,

for the foot was swollen far above the ankle. "Have you got any bran in the house, Mrs. ——" "Surman, miss." "Mrs. Surman?" "We can soon get some." "Well, do so, please, and some vinegar. We must have both to it, and as hot as she can bear it, to get this swelling down." So Nelly, who was in her element at a bit of doctoring, soon had ready all that was necessary; and then, attending to the foot, she remained with her until she was easier.

"Now—I did not catch your name?" "Lovell, miss—Barbara Lovell." "You must keep quite still and quiet—and—my name's Nelly; I live not far from here—in Westbourne Terrace; at least, I am staying there. I will come up and see you in the morning early, if you will allow me, and I shall hope to find you better. You will, I know, kindly see to her through the night, Mrs. Surman, and do all you can for her; for this application

must be kept quite warm, and it will want renewing. For any extra trouble to which you are put I will pay you."

The next morning, and each day afterwards, Nelly was there, and the foot got better; but it was still too painful to put it to the ground. The wrist was worse, however, and needed care, as it pained her greatly. As the girl was evidently respectable, and the house where she was was decent, the aunts did not object to Nelly's visits; in fact, they were rather glad that she did go there each day, as it gave her a bit of extra exercise, and obliged her to devote less time to drawing. For, with those two whole days a week at the National, they thought that was now quite as much as she ought to do, and therefore she had better cease going to sketch at Kensington. So, as Nelly's own impulses were in the same direction—to slacken the drawing, and see more to the patient—as it

was like a bit of "home work," and she was really sorry for her, she soon began to stay with her much longer, as the girl was friendly, and seemed grateful for it.

But at the end of that week there was a change; and as it was evident that a little low nervous fever was coming on, from the fright, and the pain, and a wetting that she had got that day, Nelly insisted on sending for a doctor; who, when he saw her, said she would get all right with care, but it would not be for a week or two.

The girl's rooms were very fair, and plainly but comfortably furnished; and they were not without several little elegancies and sundry flowers, which showed refinement. But as there were other lodgers in the house, and it was evident the woman's time was a good deal occupied, Nelly asked her aunts that evening, if she might take her some little things she needed in sick-room cookery.

The aunts, as we have said, were two worthy creatures, and they were quite as pleased as Nelly was, when able to do good; therefore in the way of beef-tea and et-ceteras, they said that she could have all that was proper for her; and that Nelly could take them for her, with the fresh ferns and flowers which she brought her daily.

The girl was fond of them; and when Nelly called on the morrow with some finer ferns than usual, she said in her own country that all the woods were "full" of ferns and flowers. "And so they are in mine," was the reply. "I, too, love flowers. And have you got hills as well?" "Oh, yes, great green ones, where you can see for miles, and the wind will blow your hair about delightfully. But it's years ago since I saw those green hills, aye, years ago; and perhaps I never shall see them again—God knows!" "Oh, I hope so," Nelly said. "We have hills also,

and great high green ones too. We will have a chat about them when you are better, for I love the woods and hills, and I like anybody who likes them too. But I must not let you talk too much just now, or we shall get, I know, a scolding from the doctor. Well, I am glad, that I am, that he thinks you better."

"Now, is there anything more that I can do for you before I go?" "No thank you, not anything, miss; I am much obliged to you. I shall never make amends for all your kindness." "Don't talk of that," said Nelly; "if we can't help each other in this world, whatever are we good for? You want that letter posted, don't you?" "Oh, the boy will see to that, thank you, Miss; young George. I was just putting a bit of paper round it, in case his hands are dirty, for he often stops to play about the road." "Well, give it me—I am going by the office;

you will then know that it's safe." "You are very kind; I will take the paper off."

"Now you keep quiet; it will go all right put in just as it is," and Nelly took it. "Well, thank you miss, the country post, then, please." "All right," said she, "I will post it as I pass; so now good-bye; I will come again to-morrow."

But it so happened, that just as she was about to put it in the box, she dropped it on the ground—through a stupid lad who came and brushed against her; and as the paper round it was thus dirtied, she took it off. Then, as it left her hand, she saw to whom it went:—

"Harry Anderson, Esq.,
"Bettwys-y-Coed,
"North Wales."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LETTER—LOVE'S PENANCE—THE DISCOVERY.

HARD lines for Nelly. So this, then, was the girl—her favoured rival! Yes; this good-looking girl—this Barbara Lovell—on whom she had waited, and to whom she had promised to come again to see her on the morrow. Well, she herself was plain enough, she knew. No wonder then! He need not though have been so very cruel, and have gained her love when his heart was another's. He sought her, not she him. Oh, it was hard, indeed; but it was hard; and very, very cruel! The first she ever loved—perhaps the last. She never could forgive him; never!

Well, all hope was gone; so now that ended it. The letter showed their knowledge of each other: that was the girl, no doubt, who had had for years that love he offered her. To think that she, his own that was to be—yes, "was"—should be the one to send that letter to him. Those tell-tale words! and now that fatal letter! Would they had never met; would she were at home again; but she could not leave with any show of reason before the day they fixed—the sixteenth, Saturday—and that was eight days yet. How, then, escape from waiting on that girl, unless her aunts knew why, after the interest she and they had taken? What could she say—whatever could she do, to cease those visits? The girl that day was "better"—so that, then, would be "true." She would think it over.

No, she would not; she would decide at once! She would; explain it how she may,

for she must cease them. It was too humiliating; it was past all bearing. She would have no more of it, if even she told all.

She wait on her? No, not for him to laugh at, next time he saw his handsome lady-love; for them most likely to both laugh together, there, in that studio; to think the one should so wait on the other. Oh, no, indeed; thank God! she had spirit left. What! wait on her, her rival in his love, she through whom he was false, so basely false? No, no, she would not. As she was his, why let him pay a nurse to see to her. Oh, how she wished that she had never gone.

Still, she did not know her name; she had said but "Nelly"—said it from habit; that was at least one comfort. But when she missed her, she might write and say so, and name "Miss Nelly." Perhaps she had

named her. Yes, and in that letter! If so, the very name might set him thinking.

Well, let him think, as she had had to do, since when they parted—think! aye, both night and day—and ask himself why he had played her false. She certainly would not go there again; there was no call for it, she would not do it; and on that point she went to bed, decided.

But that night, before she slept, she thought of words that troubled her, and made her think, in spite of every effort; words she had said there, on her bended knees. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Had that girl really trespassed against her? She had not, knowingly. That she even knew they loved was scarcely likely. How then could she expect her trespasses would be forgiven, if to one who had never injured her she was harsh and stern, and very unforgiving; and that, too, while

she was ill? No; pang though it was, she felt she must not do it. Her own resentment must give way to kindness, and passion yield to duty. She did not quite feel she could pardon him, but if she could forgive him, well, she would; but as for her, as she had never injured her, she would still go to her, and do all she could for her until she mended. She was ill and needed it; she would not desert her. She would face it through, although she was her rival; and strive to do as she would be done by, no matter what the effort ye might cost her.

Had that sense of "duty" been a less strong element in Nelly's composition, her own feelings must, under the circumstances have gained the mastery; but coupled, as it always was, with a wish to do good in all kindliness to those who needed it, the decision at which she arrived, by the subduing of angry pas-

sions, calmed and comforted her; and when she arose the next morning, it was with a firm determination that, so far as the girl Barbara was concerned, there should be no change in her.

When, therefore, Nelly went to Notting Hill, though looking on the girl as her own rival, the girl herself perceived no change whatever. She was just as kind to her, and just as thoughtful as she had been each day. She found her on the mend, though her wrist was worse, and troubled her; and she was still confined to bed.

It was but natural that Nelly should now notice the girl's face more particularly than she had done; and she could not help thinking, as she did so, that it certainly was a face to attract attention—well-formed and regular, of olive tint, but glowing colour through it; and bright good eyes, and hair blue-black and wavy. Her figure, too, was good; she

could see that as she lay; and she was a well-spoken girl, and lady-like.

It might have been through daily seeing her, that now to Nelly her face seemed familiar, or like some other face she had often seen; but, though there seemed a likeness, she could not fix it. She also thought as she sat there beside her, how very like she was to her he mentioned, as being at the Art School at South Kensington; the same "deep hazel eyes, and long black glossy hair"—the girl who posed there in a gipsy group. It was she, no doubt—a dark brunette, she would look the gipsy well; and she could now easily understand why, in his imagination, she was "the most beautiful girl" he ever saw, although she was but handsome, and that through gipsy beauty. A model there, a model too, to him. She was the girl; his admiration of her was the proof.

But, in jumping to that conclusion, Nelly was unaware that this girl Barbara was his own private model; and that, therefore, she would not be likely, or be allowed, to give to all those there the chance of copying her handsome face; that face that brought him money when on canvass, and made each picture. The one he meant was an Albanian girl, well-known to those who went there—the sweetest face that ever sun shone on, though her home was Leather Lane, and her room a garret; and shared with her grandfather—the man who had that "most artistic" beard; as sundry picture windows duly testify.

Now Nelly, with a strange perversity, instead of avoiding an unpleasant topic in the presence of her rival—for as her rival she now regarded her—seemed rather bent on adding to her own sorrow, by needlessly endeavouring to get details; as to what this Barbara Lovell really was, and all

about her; for she purposely changed the conversation to her own doings at the Galleries. The girl was up on Art, she saw that instantly, and some Art terms, too, escaped her; but although the topic of models was freely discussed between them, she gave no sign. She had been to Kensington, and had seen the pictures; and she named the best there, and that was all; nothing to show she was an artist's model.

Well, perhaps, then, she was wrong; she was his acquaintance only, not his model. That did not mend the matter anyway. It rather made it worse. However, she was the girl, no doubt; the letter showed it. But what about that grandfather—the old man with the beard? "Do your friends know, Barbara, how ill you are?" "No, miss; I have not sent to them. They live a long way off; in fact, I have not seen them for some years." "You have none in Town, then?"

"No; they are in the country." "You like the country, I can see, yourself?" "I do; though it is very many years ago since I lived in it. Twelve years, at least. Since then, I have lived in London and New York, at least in Brooklyn—that's just opposite." "But have you not any friends to come and see you?" "I have but one, an old and valued one; but he is now away. I have sent him word. The letter that you posted was to him."

She turned aside to hide her flush of colour at this fresh proof. "I merely ask because very shortly—in fact, on Saturday—I am going away; back to my home amongst the woods and hills." "Ah! I envy you, miss; and shall miss you much. We, too, had woods and hills; I used to love them. I never tired of roaming all about them, and looking up the valley." It was on Nelly's tongue to say "what valley" was it? But she did

not like to seem anxious to know so very much about her. "You left your home, then, when you were but young?" "About twelve years ago. I was then eighteen. Father was very harsh; I could not stay there. He has been harsh since, and I have never seen him." "Ah! it is a great mistake," said Nelly, "when parents are harsh towards their children. We had a sad instance of it in our own parish.

"There was a girl there, a farmer's daughter, a very tidy girl, who had to leave her home from just that cause: they were living then, though, in an adjoining parish. Well, she was years away, no one knew where; when one cold winter night—it was New Year's Eve—this girl came home again, unknown to all—home through the snow at midnight, all alone; and as she looked in through the window there, her father cursed her!

"Why, Barbara," said Nelly, seeing her fixed look give place to one of terror, "I have quite frightened you. It is as good as a ghost-story, by the look of you; only my story is true, you know." "Yes," said she, "it does sound like it, miss." "Was it not dreadful? and she, poor girl, to hear it!" The girl quite shuddered. "Yes, it was, indeed. But did he see her?" "If not then, he did after, and recognised her; for all that he could say was 'That white face at the window! 'Twas hers: she heard me!' And ever since then he has been quite childish."

"And what became of her?" was Jessic's question. "She was drowned, poor soul—I fear she drowned herself, cursed as she was that night by her own father!" "But were they sure 'twas her face at the window?" "No doubt about it, for they found her handkerchief down by the water. Her mother

and her brother still grieve for her, but her father is childish. But I must not tell you any more about it, for you are too excitable, and it will do you harm. I wish I had not; but it occurred to me when you named what you did." But Jessie knew of it before, from Anderson. "I hope you won't be going quite away? I shall so miss you, for you have been so kind." "My home is far from here," Nelly said; "but if you are not better when the time comes, I will try to stay another week with you. My aunts, I know, will let me."

The next day Barbara was not so well, and Nelly feared that she had done her harm. When she was again there on the following morning, she found her crying. She had been trying to write—her desk was on the bed—but her wrist so pained her that she could not do it.

"Oh, let it be till to-morrow, Barbara,"

said Nelly. "Don't distress yourself for a thing like that! We will have the wrist seen to, and perhaps to-morrow your hand will then be better. We will get the doctor to see it when he comes." "But the letter ought to go this very night." "Not so important as all that, is it?" "Well, yes, miss, it is. I had a letter to-day containing money—the halves of two five-pound notes—and unless I acknowledge the receipt of them, my friend will think the letter has not reached me; and he also wants particularly to know how I am: and it is a two days' post there. This is the letter, miss. It is his reply to the one you posted for me." And she gave it to her. "I have known him for many years, and I am now his model.

"I did not write for money; I only told him; but he is so kind. He says he sends it to get me 'comforts,' and to 'make me

well.' That is so like him! He's the best of men; as you'd say if you knew him.

"Shall I read it, miss; his hand is difficult perhaps to you?" "Thank you," said Nelly, who had held the letter mechanically; but had not seen a line of it for the film that was spreading over her eyes, through rising tears.

So Barbara read the letter—a kind and thoughtful one. "Now I really don't like troubling you so, Miss Nelly; but if you would not mind just writing a line for me, I should," said she, "be so much obliged to you; because if he does not hear from me he will be so disappointed." She took the desk, as she could not refuse, and sat down at it; but it was too much for her, and she laid the pen down.

"I don't suppose that's a very good one," said Barbara; "but there are plenty more, miss. If you will just say, please, how much

obliged I am, and that I am going on well." "The less I say, perhaps, the better," said Nelly; "because he will see that you have had to get some one to write for you." "Well, as you like, miss; only say what's kind."

It was the hardest trial that Nelly had yet had; but, writing in Barbara's name, and disguising her hand as well as she could, she got through it; addressed it tremblingly, and sealed it up; and posted it when she went home again. That night poor Nelly cried herself to sleep. The trial certainly was hard to bear.

In a few days the other half notes were remitted, and as the wrist was still painful, she had again to sit down and write to him. "I don't think I ought to say you are better," said Nelly, looking up from her desk, "for you are certainly not so well as you were yesterday; you are low and nervous." "I

shall be better to-morrow, miss; but his letter has vexed me sadly—sadly it has! I wish I could have written it myself." "Why?" said Nelly. "I did not put anything wrong in it, did I?" "Oh! no, miss; but—shall I read it to you?" "If you like to do so, and there are no secrets in it."

So Barbara read it to her; while Nelly sat catching each word, with eager ears, and with half-parted lips.

What Anderson said, in effect was this. That, when he received the letter, he was so struck with the marked resemblance of the writing to that of one he knew, that it had called up thoughts of her, as he loved her dearly; dearer than ever, for they now had parted; and that, by merest chance—her having overheard what passed between them, the day he went away. "Your name," said he, "I promised you I would not mention, nor aught about you. I could not therefore

tell her what she asked. You must release me, Jenny, from that promise, so far as she herself may be concerned; to all besides, I'll keep it. You know what earnest love is, don't refuse me, for I must write to her and tell her all. I cannot longer bear this sad suspense. When I tell you she was 'engaged' to me, you will know how very ardently I love her. Please write at once, that I may write to her." "So will you tell him please, miss, that he is to do so."

Nelly could not reply; her heart was too full. Was daylight coming? He still then loved her—but what of Barbara, what was she to him? "To think, Miss Nelly, that I, above all others, should have injured him, when he has been so kind; I, the unconscious cause! He has been a brother to me, miss, that's what he has. Were I his sister, he could not be kinder, or have shown me more respect. If there's a good soul in this world,

'tis he! I hope he'll marry well. Whoever has him will be a lucky woman."

"And have you known him long?" said Nelly, with some effort. "Yes, many years. He and my husband were the firmest friends, and he proved a friend to us. Poor Arnold! he is dead; and so are all my children. We went abroad, and I came back a widow; and was then reduced to poverty. He met me at the worst—I had no home, no means to make one; and knew not where to go! From that sad hour to this, he has been a brother to me. May God in heaven bless him for his goodness!"

"I am sorry for you, Barbara," said Nelly, reluctant still to make the girl her confidant. "Come, don't you cry. What could have passed between you when you parted, to make that difference between him and her—the one he says there, that he 'still' loves dearly?"

"Oh, nothing, miss. I cannot make it out, unless she caught some words and missed the rest. I have been all day thinking of it, for I could not remember; but now I know. My last child I lost here, in London, just as I got to poverty. I buried him at Norwood. He lies there near the gate, poor little Harry! We named him after Mr. Anderson, because he was our friend. The head-stone there he placed; and to keep my little flowers from being injured, he had a fence put round—a pretty bronze one. It had been there for some months; and when I went to say good-bye to him, we talked about it; and I told him how I decked his little grave each week with flowers; and what a comfort now it was to me that none were taken.

"Then afterwards I fancy that I said, 'and all the evening long I sit and think—think of my own dear Harry! think of our

baby boy, our last, our loved one; so petted was he.' And then, I know, miss, I could not help crying; and he, the dear good fellow that he is, said 'Don't cry now, Jenny,'—he always called me Jenny—'let what will happen, I shall be your friend, for old times' sake. Arnold was my best friend, and you are his widow; that's enough quite for me, so cheer up, Jenny.'"

"Now don't you think, miss, if she heard me talking about my boy, she might perhaps have thought 'twas her 'dear Harry?'" "I think it very likely," Nelly said. "Oh, I do so wish I knew the lady, miss; I would go to her the moment I got well, and tell her all, and how she was mistaken!"

Nelly, unable to keep silence longer, said, "You do know her—that lady was myself!"

"You! Oh, dear Miss Nelly, don't say that; you who have been so kind. Oh, my dear Miss Nelly, I did not know it, indeed

I did not know it! Oh dear, dear," she sobbed, "to think that you I should have injured so! But I did not mean it, miss, I could not help it, now could I? To think a few words, simple and innocent like those between us, should thus have caused this trouble! Oh, Miss Nelly, do write and say; and say he need not tell it, for you know it all — know it from me, myself. Can you forgive me, miss, for all this sorrow?"

"Forgive you? yes, it was no fault of yours; it was my own fault, Barbara. I should have trusted him, and known him better—but I knew not then how very much I loved him."

The letter thus commenced for Barbara, was finished then by Nelly for herself, she telling all. It ended thus: "Remaining, Harry, still your own dear Nell."

"Looking for some blotting paper? There is some in that old book," said Barbara. She

opened it. Too startled to speak, as she saw the name in it, "Jessie Jane Lawson," she pointed enquiringly to it.

"Yes," said "Barbara," "I am that 'drowned girl'—Jessie!"

CHAPTER VII.

MUTUAL CONFIDENCE—THE STORY TOLD.

"You Jessie Lawson! Alive, and here in London! Well, this is news!" said Nelly. "I am so glad, for I seem to know you, though I never saw you—not until now, at least. Your people are our tenants, and live by us. I am Nelly Hamilton.

"But oh, Jessie, Jessie! why, for all this time, have you let your mother think that you were dead, and grieve so for you as one lost for ever? your brother George, too, whom you knew so loved you? Oh, Jessie, it was cruel! For eighteen months they

have looked on you as dead—drowned on that New Year's Eve; yet here you are, found by mere accident, and they not knowing. Why did you not send word?"

"Because my father cursed me where I stood! I heard him—heard him, miss, say these vile words, to me, his child—'Curse her, I say! curse her for ever, the jade! May she never darken my doors again!' I have not forgotten them; they burnt into my brain. What else he said I know not; my senses left me. No, Miss Nelly, I shall never now look on my home again! I would sooner starve—face death in any form!"

"It was very bad, I know, as bad as could be; and terrible for you, his child," said Nelly. "No words can justify it. Still, after all, he is your father, Jessie; and as you knew his passion and his habits, you ought at once to have written to your

mother, and told her where you were, and all about you, that she at least might see you. But you'll go back with me, now, won't you, Jessie, and send a joy into your mother's heart to once more kiss you? You don't know how she has fretted since about you, she and your brother. For your poor mother's sake you will, now, won't you?" And Nelly came and put her arms around her.

"Never!" said she, "not while my father lives."

"Oh, Jessie! don't let him, with that curse upon his mind, go to the grave like that; for though he is childish, it is always present. He talks of nothing else; and broods about it, morning, noon, and night." "Don't, don't miss, please! or else you'll make me go. I dare not. Were he again to curse me, it would kill me!" "You'll let me tell your mother and your brother, that they may

come—come here, and see you, then? I shall stay here another week. I have asked my aunts, because you are so ill. You'll do that, won't you, and return with me; with us, together?"

"No miss, you must not."

"Jessie, he thinks you dead, and that he killed you, through what he said. Come home! you must return, and try to make him think 'twas but a dream. He is not, I fear, for this world very long; and when people die, such things come home to them. Don't make his last hours worse by being from him. Could he but die in your own arms, my girl, he might die contented. But I will not urge you now, to weary you; we will talk of it to-morrow. You have brought me comfort, let me bring them joy. You will have a friend in me, come when you may—for Harry's sake. Oh, I am so happy, Jessie; look up and kiss me!"

This unexpected discovery of Harry's faithfulness, brought unmingled happiness to Nelly; and the result to Jessie, for many reasons, was also pleasing.

When they met on the morrow, Jessie said, "I am better to-day, Miss Hamilton; my hand is easier, and I had the best night I have had yet." "And so had I," said Nelly; "but you must not, Jessie, call me 'Miss Hamilton.' You are Harry's friend, remember, and therefore mine." So then she settled down for a whole morning's gossip with her, about old times, and Anderson, the past, the future. "I have known him now, Miss Nelly, for nine years, and he," Jessie said, "has always been the same; the best of men, the most considerate. He reminds me constantly of my poor husband, he is so kind and thoughtful."

"So long you have known him?" "Yes, quite that, miss; for I was at Chelsea but

about three years, and I had come just then to Dulwich. It was there I married Arnold. I lived with Mrs. Jackson, his mamma. His father was a picture-dealer, and he an artist. I used to sit for him. I have his likeness in that album there, if I may trouble you."

"There! that's poor Arnold," Jessie said; "and like him. I have some others. Here he is again, poor fellow, on his horse: that's very like him! And here they are together—the two old friends; taken some years ago, but like them both."

"Oh, yes; that's Harry—Mr. Anderson. It is very like him; just his look and manner. Just wait a bit," said Nelly. "Yes, very like him; although, of course, much younger than when I knew him." "And here's another, miss. We are all together there: we were not married then." "Yes, that is good, and very like you, too." "There is a better one than that, though, further on.

Oh, here it is! this is another of me; and that is baby: our first—dear Polly. We christened her after a little sister that he lost. I have her, too. There, that's the one—that's little Polly Jackson." "What a pretty child!" said Nelly, as she looked. "Yes; I prize that very much, although I never knew her. It was taken but a week before they lost her. She was ten years old.

"And there's my little boy—poor Harry, bless him! who lies at Norwood. And that's the other one. We named him after George—my brother George. He lies at Brooklyn, and alongside Polly, who only lived twelve months. She died convulsed. I thought when I lost her I had lost my all!"

"And this?" said Nelly. "That, Miss, is Arnold's sister Lizzie, Mrs. Armiger; and that's her husband. And this is Mr. Jackson, and that his wife. She was an invalid: I

went there as companion. That is Miss Hemming, who lived there before me." "And who are those three pretty little girls?" "The Chessletons of Chelsea — Langdale House. They were my pupils. I was nursery-governess. I went straight there from home. Their mother was a friend of Mrs. Murray, our rector's wife, at Upperton. She got the post for me.

"There are several views, too, at the end, Miss Nelly, if you'll turn to them.

"There, that is Arnold's house, and where I lived—Leigh Lodge; and that is the Picture Gallery—many a happy hour have we spent there together—and there is the school at the corner, where Miss Lizzie went to. She gave me that. She was married, though, before I went to Dulwich. There, that's their place, the one you have just turned over—the Limes at Streatham—where they lived, at least. And these are New York

views; and that's our home in Brooklyn. It shows our pretty garden and the paddock. Poor Arnold put that trellis-work and trained those roses. The last I picked before I came away, I laid upon his grave. He lies beside poor little George and Polly."

"I scarcely like to ask you about this," after a pause, said Nelly, "as it has a black border round it." "It is our ferry-boat, miss. I put that line myself. We used to go by it across the river. There were two of them; and as you see there, they are so large that they also take over horses and carriages. You see them in the centre, with the gentlemen on the one side and the ladies on the other.

"It was on that boat, Miss Nelly, that Arnold met his death. As the one boat comes up, the other starts; they are side by side at the landing; and one day as he stepped on deck, as the boat moved off, the

other bumped it, and he fell into the water. It was a mercy he was not crushed between the paddles; but they backed instantly, and rescued him. The delay in getting home, however, gave him such a chill, wet as he was, that he never got over it; and in five weeks he died. The blow nigh killed me! I came to England then, with little Harry; but soon I lost him too. And then I came, myself, to poverty!"

"Oh, Jessie! How hard it must have been. I wish," said Nelly, "I had known you then, to have helped and comforted you." "I wish you had, miss; for I almost questioned God's own goodness to me, it seemed so cruel! He first took Polly from me, then dear George, and then my husband. Then, in my sorrow, came that other blow—poor Harry. I had to raise the money, miss, to bury him!"

"Poor soul!" said Nelly, as she bent over

her and kissed her forehead. "You were left then badly off?"

"Well, not so badly but I could have managed, had not a seeming friend most basely robbed me. I knew not then so much as I know now, and so I foolishly put almost all my money in my box—a small one, to have with me. After I had buried him, and paid all claims, what I had left was nigh four hundred pounds.

"A widow who lived by us, was so kind through all his illness, and through all my trouble, that I unwisely trusted her; and at the last, the day before I started to come to Liverpool, for greater safety I took the notes out, to sew them here and there inside my stays. I had folded some and fastened them —just forty pounds—and was folding others to also put them in; when she, that widow, came in suddenly, saw all the notes, and laughed me out of it; and so I put them

back—that is, the rest, and pressed them safely down all in one corner.

"As I was just about to lock the box, that woman gave a scream, and then she fainted. I ran for water, but she soon was better. Of course, I see it now, I did not then—nor until I got to London. Then, I found, too late, that every note was gone!"

"Good gracious!" Nelly said, "what did you do?" "Saw the police, miss, and they telegraphed; but the word that came was, 'House shut up, she's gone—we'll try to track her.' But nothing came of it; I lost it all, and all friends here had left.

"Even then, I hoped to have managed for a time, by sitting as a model. It would bring me something; enough I thought, perhaps, to pay my rent. But I found the Art Schools closed, and artists out; out for their sketching tours, it then was August; so that then failed me. I tried a little

school—a day-school, miss—I had rooms at Camberwell, and got some pupils; but weeks passed by and not one even paid me, so I gave it up; and tried for laundress work, and got a little.

"Then came October, and the Schools were opened, so I went to Kensington; and, as an artist's widow got engaged, for second turn, the middle of that month; with chance of further sittings by-and-by. When that time came, I was past work—ill in bed!

"When I got over that, my place was filled; and, as they saw I was too weak to sit the time they needed, they had to put me off till I got stronger. Then my boy got ill, and faded day by day, all through that dreary month, into December. I could not leave him. He lingered on awhile, and then departed—my last link severed! I cared not then how soon I followed him.

"The day I buried him was Christmas Eve. I pawned my clothes to do it."

"Oh, Jessie!" Nelly said, "how very sad! But where was your old friend, Harry, all this time?"

"I knew not then. I have only known it since. The letter that I sent him never reached him. I had it back, marked, 'Gone away; not known.' The first he knew of my poor husband's death was through the papers. I had sent it to the 'Times,' that his own friends should see it. He wrote at once; the letter was returned; I had started. So then he advertised here and out there, for information; but I was far too troubled, miss, to look at papers.

"Well, when it came to that, Miss Nelly, that I had lost all in the world worth living for, and was then almost destitute, I went up—as I knew that artists had returned to Town—to his old place, St. John's Wood;

hoping, although the letter had come back to me, that some one there amongst them would know about him, or where he was gone to. But the house where he had lived was down, and scores of others too, for a railway they were making.

"I then went the round of the picture shops—all, from west to east—and to several dealers; but they knew nothing—he only sold, they said, at private hand. I tried, as the Acadeny was closed, to get a catalogue; but I could not; nor from any source could I get what I wanted—his address; more than the vague one, 'somewhere west, I think.'

"I thought it over. Would Mrs. Jackson or the old man see me, now that his son was dead and all our children?

"Three times I wandered along Denmark Hill—where much was altered—but could not turn for Dulwich; so well I knew there every inch of ground all down that dear old

lane, the Red Post Road. At last I went there, for I was nearly penniless. Leigh Lodge had vanished, and the old villas by it. It all just there was new. I asked—the same replies; there was nothing known.

"I went to Bond Street. The place was then a music shop, and 'Jackson had retired.' They knew no more. Thence to the Waterloo Road—the painting place a chapel. I toiled to Streatham: the Armigers had left 'some time.' I went into the city; but 'Welch and Armiger' no longer met me. It was some long name—the place a restaurant. They 'never troubled, and they did not know.'

"I took the boat to Chelsea: same result; the place was now a school, and no one knew the Chessletons. Eight years and more had passed since I lived with them. I got out at Nine Elms; the man who made for him

by Vauxhall Bridge had 'left the neighbourhood.' I tried the tradesmen where we used to deal, but no one knew."

"Oh, Jessie, what a trial! But why," said Nelly, "did you not go home?"

"I could not, miss. The letter that I sent was never answered. They would have it New Year's Eve, a time I thought when they might think of me. It gave them our address, and said, 'where, should you wish to see me, we shall be ten days.' We were there, however, for some time, as we did not leave Town till the end of May, as my husband had an Academy picture in hand, and he wished to wait to see if it would sell. It sold in May, and then we started, and sailed for New York on the twenty-eighth. Why I said 'if,' was because my father had not only ceased to write to me for some years, but had sent me word when I had wanted to come home and see them all again, that

I had better stay where I was till I had 'bettered myself.'

"That was his sneer at my own remark, miss, when he wanted to marry me to a man old enough to be my father—John Purchas—and who was also middling off. It was through my father's temper, and his making me so miserable about that man, and being also so pestered with the attentions of another there — John Lewis — that I decided on leaving home. I was then eighteen, and lest Lewis might follow and annoy me, where I went to was kept a secret."

"And did he find you out?" "He did by accident. I was in the Cheyne Walk one day with the children. We stayed to see the steamer landing passengers. Amongst them was John Lewis, who saw and recognised me, and came up and spoke. He called to see me often after that, so I spoke about it; and then they threatened him, for

they both knew all connected with him from Mrs. Murray. He said if I would let him have my likeness, he would leave the neighbourhood. I had it taken, and I sent it him."

"And did that stop him?"

"No miss, it did not, for in his own rough way, he really loved me; but soon I left there, for they lost their children. The eldest sickened with diphtheria, and died; the others followed her. In less than three weeks those three girls were buried. I thought their parents would have gone quite frantic! I saw my occupation there was over; I named returning; but knowing why I came, they would not let me, till some good post should offer. They were both most kind.

"My husband's father was a friend of theirs, he called to see them, and they very kindly mentioned my name to him. Most luckily, Miss Hemming—the lady who had

lived there as companion to Mrs. Jackson, was leaving in a week or two, and so I went there."

"Did Lewis trace you there?" "I think not, miss, for I never saw him till we were leaving London; but I have seen him since, for he tried to stop me one day in the Park, but I got away. But a day or two after that, I met him on Barnes Common; and he was then so very rough, and so unlike himself, that I think he had been drinking—he was with some gipsies; but, as Mr. Anderson was sketching near, I called out to him, and then Lewis left me. But he tracked me to my rooms—I was then at Brixton, and threatened me; and so I left there, and have since been here—as 'Barbara Lovell.'"

"But why," said Nelly, "did you change your name?"

"To stop all clue, to him, and all my

friends. He knew that I was married; he saw my ring—I have not worn it since. I dropped the 'Mrs.' and took up the 'Miss.' With change of name, and state, and place, we hoped to baffle him. It was Mr. Anderson's suggestion. He saw that the constant fear of Lewis would be sure to worry me; the more so as he then was with a gipsy lot, and he had seemed to me that day to be quite reckless.

"In one sense I was sorry for him, as I feared it was through his old love for me, that he had dropped to what he was; but I did not like him when he farmed near us—he lived at Longlands—so I would not have him. Then he went from bad to worse, and joined some gipsies."

"Was that the reason then you thought of 'Lovell;' for that's a gipsy name?"

"No, miss, it was not that; it was in this way. Just before then, when we met

on Barnes Common, Mr. Anderson had sent home a large Figure subject, for which I sat; and the title to it was 'Barbara Lovell, the Gipsy Beauty,' as though it had been taken from a real gipsy; so he said, as I was 'Lovell' on the canvass, I had better keep the name; so long, at least, as I thought I should need it. If you will give me my dress, please miss, off that chair, I will show you the first rough sketch of me that he made for the picture. That is the key if you don't mind unlocking that drawer, the top one, and giving me the folio you will find there.

"That's it," said Jessie, as Nelly handed it to her and she opened it; "and that's the one George saw and recognised." "I see it all," said Nelly; "and the likeness that I saw in you to someone, was to him. You feature him." "There, that you know, Miss Nelly, don't you, now?" "Why, that is

Landimoor, where your mother lives! with George, too, at the door. Oh, now I have hopes indeed, you will come back home. And who took that?" "Why, Mr. Anderson, the last time he was there. I asked him to."

"Then all this mystery, it seems, and change of name, was to escape this Lewis?" "In part it was, Miss Nelly, but mainly that not one of them should find me here, and force me home to hear his curse again—my father's.

"They thought me dead! To still think so would stop enquiry, and suit my purpose; but now you accidentally have heard my story. So fearful was I then that friends should find me, after that horrid night, that I implored Mr. Anderson—if he would save me from some bad end, to promise faithfully he would keep my secret; and not reveal to any single soul I still was living.

"He promised; and since then has kept his word, as you know, miss. I am truly sorry that through it he vexed you."

"Oh, that is over now and done with, Jessie."

"Yes, miss, I am glad it is. There is something else, too, that I will show you, if you will give me my desk, please—the copy of our marriage certificate."

"Why it was by 'special' license!" said Nelly, looking at it. "Yes, miss, it had to be. We were married secretly." "Why, I thought that cost a lot, some fifty pounds?" "It did; and since then I have known the want of fifty pence!"

"But why secret?" said Nelly. "Well, miss, his mamma got worse, just when the summer ended, and they thought her living but from day to day. She, and his father, too, had long been urging him to try to marry a Miss Chamberlain, a rich young girl

who very often came there, but whom he hated; and as he feared that his mamma might on her death-bed make him promise, he, being pledged to me, then married me, to end it. We dearly loved each other, and long had done so."

"'*In the presence of us,*'" said Nelly, continuing to read. "Why, Harry's name is here! Oh, now I see."

"Yes, miss, he and his friend, a Mr. Arthur Brown."

"'*According to the Rites and Ceremonies.*' Oh, that I read before. What's this name, Jessie?"

"Bailey, miss. That's the clergyman who married us; the Reverend Bertram Bailey. He was a friend of my husband, and was staying in town for a few weeks; so as he knew he could get the consent of the Vicar, he agreed to marry us." "And shall I—" "What, miss?" said Jessie, as Nelly checked

herself. "Oh, I did not think what I was saying, it was very silly of me; but shall I —you must not repeat this, Jessie—shall I, if ever I do marry, you know, have to write my name on a long piece of paper like that?"

"Something like it, miss, I expect," said Jessie, smiling. "At all events you will have to sign a book, and two of them. That is a copy of what we then signed."

"Only fancy!" said Nelly, "then that long paper made you man and wife? I thought you only said 'I will,' and put the ring on."

"Well," said Jessie, "I hope, Miss Nelly, your time will not be long first, and then you will know for certain everything about it."

"But however did you manage it?"

"Oh, easily enough, miss; we were both of age, and so could please ourselves; so cash and 'residence' were all we needed; and as Arnold had the one, why Mr. Anderson contrived the other, by inviting him, on the plea

of his father being from home then, to stay in Town with him; and for fifteen nights he slept there. That made us safe. Then I went to Town on some excuse or other; joined Arnold there, and came back Jessie 'Jackson;' for at the studio in Fitzroy Square—why, Mr. Bailey married us."

"Oh, what fun!" said Nelly. "And did no one know of it where you were living?"

"Not a soul, miss, until some months afterwards; when just as we were getting rather apprehensive about it, lest we should be found out, the old man took Arnold to task one day pretty strongly, as to 'why' did he so obstinately refuse to settle down? So what should he do, but he told him that he was 'settled' already; for constant association with me as his model, had changed my name to 'Mrs. Arnold Jackson!'"

"Whatever did he say?" was Nelly's question.

"I don't know exactly what he said, Miss Nelly; but in effect the old man turned us out; and we then went into rooms. Well, Mr. Anderson was a great favourite with both of them, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson—they little thought how he had aided us, and he had to be peace-maker. But it was of no use. You see I was not his equal, miss, and they threw that at him, because that Miss Chamberlain was well connected.

"However, he so worked on the old man's feelings that, at the last moment—a fortnight after—just before we had fixed to leave, he gave him a packet for Arnold, or rather for me. On opening it, to our surprise we found a roll of notes—five hundred pounds—with this short note, 'For her sake, and not yours; for her kindness and attention to your mother. Henceforth we separate. I have done with you.'

"Well, miss, when we reached New York

and crossed to Brooklyn, where Arnold fixed to live—in June, the early part of it—he put the money in the bank at once, and added to it as he made his way. In two years after it was nearly doubled, and we were both as happy as the day was long. Then came a smash. That bank went with the others. We lost it all! But Arnold set to work then all the harder."

"Oh," Nelly said, "that was a blow, indeed. And how was it at the last that you came home, that New Year's Eve?"

"By merest accident," was Jessie's answer. "The hinges of my box had got unfastened, and the woman where I was lent me an old one until that was mended, to put my dress in. It was lined with pieces of a newspaper, part of a 'Hereford Times.' She was that county woman, and had friends there. Being my own county, I was looking at it, and I saw a paragraph there headed 'Upperton'—

our village, miss—and underneath it these words, 'Fearful Fire.'

"I read what followed, looked to see the date, and found it was when I sent them that letter!

"That opened my eyes at once, and explained, as I thought, why they had not written. My letter, no doubt, shared the fate of all, and so all clue was lost.

"Well, I made up my mind then directly. I had still my wedding ring, and this gold watch—poor Arnold's gift—some ear-rings, and a dress. With those I raised six pounds. I told the landlady to keep my box, and paid her. Next day I started. I saw they were at Landimoor by the paper, through your good father's kindness, and I also knew it too from Mr. Anderson. I had been there once when friends of ours lived there—the Jordans. It was New Year's Eve. Twelve years had passed since I had left my home.

But before I started the thought crossed my mind, miss, whether or not my father would receive me; and so strongly did I feel his past treatment, that I determined, if he failed to meet me kindly, I would return at once, and he should have no clue to me. So I tore from off the box the card I had put on, and wrote another—simply 'J. Jane,' in place of 'Mrs. Jackson.' The box I left at Worcester, and then went on by rail, timing my arrival there for ten o'clock, so as to see my own dear mother first; as I knew, as it was New Year's Eve, that my father would then be out. But I lost my way, and when I got there it was midnight, miss. What followed you well know. I dare not dwell on it.

"All I could remember afterwards was that I got lost in the snow, and then I heard the water; and then two kind souls lifted me up from the roadside, where I must have

fallen, and placed me in a wagon; and next, I was in Worcester, ill in bed, and there I had to stay.

"Well, Miss Nelly—and it was as though Providence had directed it—one day, before I was really well enough to travel, the thought came to me that I must get to London, that very day; go then and there; and go I did. When we got to Paddington, and I was waiting for my box, who, of all other persons in this world, should be there, on the platform too, but he whom I had so long wished to meet—your own dear Harry, Mr. Anderson! He had just come up in that same train from Oxford."

"Oh, I am so glad," said Nelly; "I remember the time distinctly. I met him at the Hunt Ball, in Worcester, and he named about returning. He was staying with the Camerons."

"I need not say how glad he was to see

me, or I him. A few words told my story. He took me with him to a lady friend, who let rooms in Cecil Street; and there I stayed with her for several weeks, as I had a slight relapse. 'She is the widow of a dear old friend of mine,' he said; 'we have just met, suddenly. Treat her as you would treat my sister, until I can arrange the future for her.' And as a brother to me he's been since."

"I well can fancy so," said Nelly, warmly.

"He got back all my things, and went to Worcester; and gave the landlady five pounds for me, 'his sister,' and also five for those good people who had saved my life—saved me from dying that night in the snow—she knew them. He also saw the doctor; but all he said was, 'Never mind it, please. I shall not charge her.'"

"How good it was of Harry," Nelly said. "It was indeed, Miss."

"Then after I got about again, he said,

'Now which shall you like best, Jenny; to be in some light business, which I will get for you, or be, as you are used to it, an artist's model; in which case, I will find you occupation? Or would you rather only sit to me, as my own private model?' Of course, I said I would rather sit to him. So he told me to make myself quite easy then as to the future, for, as long as I needed help, I should not want it. He got rooms for me, and arranged it all; and, ever since then, I have been his model."

"And do you like it?"

"Yes, very much. He is so brotherly, and it's like old times." "When you come home I must get you to sit to me." "I will, miss; but please don't press me till I have seen him first, I owe so much to him; nor name to anyone that you have seen me here, until he tells you."

"I won't," said Nelly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION.—HARRY ASKS PAPA.

THE letter Harry sent delighted Nelly. His impulse was, he said, at first to write; but then, remembering about the aunts, he feared to do so, as, if they saw it, they would then know all. And so he waited, hoping to hear from her—that she had not the address he had quite forgotten. No letter coming, he thought she must have left, and gone back home; and knowing that when he saw her all could be explained—he seeing Jessie—he fixed to wait until he came to Eymor, which

would be as soon as ever he could get away.

But the note that she had sent from Notting Hill made him so think of her, that he wrote at once to Jessie, and named what happened. But all was now explained, and he hoped done with. He was busy painting. The small ones for the Dudley he had finished, as also the Lleder Bridge, one of the two studies for the next Academy; and the other one—a woodland bit at Bettwys—he hoped to manage by the end of the next month, September; when, instead of coming back as he proposed—through Ludlow, to sketch the "Feathers"—he would get straight on to Town, see Jessie, talk it over, and thence to Eymor; when, if she would return to Landimoor—to stay there, or to see them, they could break it to her friends, and arrange for her to come while he was over.

As the letter was a very loving one, and

named his intention to "ask papa," and tell him all about it, when the end of the week came that she had to return home, Nelly left London with very different feelings to those she had anticipated; and Frank met her at the station. Before leaving, she and Jessie had a good deal of talk together, the result of which was, that she half promised her she "would" return to Eymor; but although she was aware that she was far more expense to Mr. Anderson than an ordinary model would be, she, used as she had been to town life for so long, could scarcely think how she could ever make the country bearable.

When Nelly reached home there was an arch of flowers by the Lodge, and the bells were ringing; for scouts had announced her approach, and the men were in the belfry, ready to give her a good peal, for they said "hur wan worthy on it; is, her wan;" and

as Mr. Arundell was most decidedly of the same opinion, he let them do so.

Such a clash had not been heard since they rang for Mrs. Warrilow on her wedding anniversary—the twenty-fifth of April—and in honour of the little Warrilow who had just made his appearance. They then rang them, and shot them too; for they remembered the jolly doings in the mill meadow, when Betsy Potts won the stuff dress, Sarah Turner the print, Jane Smith the tea, and Aaron the tobacco—Jem's claim being disallowed through the surreptitious sanding of his trousers; and when Master Bob Hamilton landed the two winners, "Kicking Jenny" and "Little Alice," and got fetched out of the tent afterwards by Mr. Frank, when dancing with Polly Everill, who ever since then had "fancied herself" considerably.

The good news that Nelly was at last returning soon spread, and it gladdened the

hearts of all the cottagers, who, in spite of the attention and kindness of her friend Clara, had missed her much; as she had been away so very long, longer than she said she should. The day before her departure was devoted to purchases, and the old people, and sundry of the juveniles, found they had not been forgotten; Bob, too, on whom she called in Worcester, with a handsome present.

It was now the last week in August, and as Nelly went round the parish to see them all, she found the country looking most charming; and she appreciated it none the less through her long absence from it, and because the signs of autumn—that time she loved so much, were present. The frosty freshness of the early morning; the white fog in the valley, like a sea; the clustered berries ripening in the lanes; the changing tints just showing on the trees. And birds were singing, too, in every garden, and last late swallows flocking

for a start; the yellow hawkweeds bloomed, and purple saffron, and nuts were bunching in the woods and hedges—joy for the juveniles when next month's sun should turn them, and stain the ferns; and blotch with colour all the bramble leaves.

The days were jolly days, dry under foot, and light, too, overhead—a clear pale blue, and flecked with silvery clouds; and all the greens had thickened, from full-bushed hedges to tall oaks and elms, touched with new leaves, soon to be thinned and fall. And all the aftermath was fresh and bright, where fattening Herefords made pleasant colour, or lay in shadow under shady trees; and all the wheat was looking ripe for harvest—late in that country—the golden corn and soft white bending barley; and all the hops, that long had linked, were colouring; and all the orchards, weightier day by day, were reddening with apples.

The cottage gardens had their camomiles, whose "blows" are useful; and tansy, famed for cakes; and dyer's mignonette was in the hedges, its pale spikes turning as the sun went round—from east to south, and then from west to north—true to its source of light; and elecampane, too, with yellow stars, the village remedy for sundry ills. The spurge, called "churm stuff," was amongst the corn—old Aaron's cure for warts; and on the heaths was "everlasting love," allied to those whose blossoms make immortelles for Père la Chaise—fond tributes to the memory of friends departed. And by the river was the great reed-mace, and women getting it, to use its downy seeds to stuff their pillows, and sell the heads for hat and velvet brushes—one penny each, for every penny helped them.

The wood paths, too, were thick and beautiful, from overhanging boughs and clustered leaves; and softer for the thickening of the

moss, which spread beneath the tall fine-fronded ferns, now fully grown, and waiting autumn tints—shared with the trees above, of russet, brown, and gold, as on the commons; where ferns, five feet in height, hid all the youngsters, when racing down the narrow paths to school.

The old people had been well looked after by Clara Arundell; who had enjoyed her little duties none the less that they took her frequently to Eymor House, for divers necessaries for the sick and ailing, as she thereby saw her friend Frank rather oftener; and she often went with Laura on the pony, all round the parish. Whiteface had had an easy time of it, certainly, and he was very prompt; but, now that Nelly had returned, his unusual buoyancy of spirits would regain its level.

Old Joe had a great deal to say to her, and so had Tom; and, as for the magpie,

he chattered so fast at her, that it was a complete amalgamation of all he knew, and like "cross readings." Jem, the fisherman, brought her his first take of lamperns, then just in season; and Aaron brought some "moffs"—a recent source of profit, he having just been initiated into the mysteries of moth-hunting by a gentleman who had been over there; and who used to camp out by the New Forest—at Emery Down, a mile from Lyndhurst.

"Yer sis, mam," said Aaron, "this here bin the month fur it, loikewoise the nixt an the nixter—Sep-tember an Hoc-tober—both on 'em; the two, so to saay it." "But how do you catch them?" said Nelly. "Well, it ba thisawaay, mam. A 'sugars' the trees." "Sugar them?" "Is, mam, ooth sugar an rum—a pity to use him thatawaay, though, as a bin good ta drink—an tracle; a does it i' thun arternoon, an a scraapes a

bit o' the bark hoff 'em, ta maake it stick. Thin, arter dark, mam, whin the moffs be a roisin fro' the feerns, an the bushes up i' thun ar, a taakes the lantern—which it bin a bull's-eye, mam, as a gid ma, fur ma ciwility o' spache, an ma rasonable waay o' spakin it—an a prowls, an a prowls, an a saays nothin, not no word, a keeps saylunce till a ba come ta 'em—thin, a has 'em! A flashes it onter 'em, sattles them as oona do, an houlds ma bottle to the tree ta 'em, as ool do, ta fix 'em."

"What bottle?" said Nelly. "What is in it?" "Well, mam, it be a longful sort o' word, an a conna spal it; but a gotten it writted down o' ma book, so as ta kneow whatn ta ax fur. This be it, mam, ef yer con spal it," said he, bringing out a dirty memorandum-book from the recesses of his jacket. "Cy, Cyanide of—what's this word Aaron?" "Ul lave that ta yer, mam; putt

it whaat yer thinks bast." "Potassium. Whatever's that?" said she. "Pison, mam, pison, bin the manin on it, ony the gintleman putt it thatawaay fur short, so as ivery fool shoodna kneow." "I see," said Nelly.

"So, mam, as I were a saayin, a putts the bottle ta 'em, an that sattles 'em; an thin a stickiès a pin inter 'em, an shoves 'em hon the cork as loines the caase—a tin un, as a carries; a gid it ma. An a goos honter the next un, an sattles them i' the saame sort o' a waay; and so on till a done 'em; an thin a works the trees oover agin to cotch them as ba comed sense."

"And are they worth anything, Aaron?" "Worth, mam? A belaves yer; at laste they ool be whin uv cotched 'em, which a hopes ta do. Here bin the proice on 'em, mam, what I be ta ax fur 'em, an the naames putted ta 'em, so as a shanna ba done, mam. A be a larnin on 'em, but they be orful hard

loike, they sticks o' ma tathe; a conna spake 'em. Mebbe yer rade 'em, mam, fur I ta hear?"

So to humour him, Nelly read what Aaron's friend had written. "Promessas, Brunnias, Sponsors, Quadras, and Owl-moths," with the price attached; from one-and-six per dozen, to two-and-six apiece. "Why, Aaron," said she, "you will be a rich man yet!" "A manes it, mam; an uz workin the bats as well. A showd ma how ta fish fur 'em." "Fish!" said she, "why bats fly." "A kneows 'em do, mam; but a fishes fur 'em fur orl that. It stonishes Jem, it do; a conna maake it hout, no he conna. It ba thisaway, mam. A gits a burdock, an a taakes the top on him—the yud, mam—an a dips'm in some whoitewaash, an a droies him; thin a gits ma rod, an a putts him hon the line—a pace o' string, mam."

"How queer, Aaron!" "It ba true, mam;

an a goos hout ooth him arter dark, a fishin. On comes Mr. Bat; and oh, thinks he, ain't that a jolly moff!—a whoite un. Uz hev'm fur supper. An a hevs'm, mam, fur a goos in fur him an clutches him. But the burdock yud sticks ta him, ba rason o' the prickles, an so—a has'm! So thin a sattles him, an a sprads'm hout."

"Oh, you cruel man!" said Nelly. "No, mam, a baynt cruel, ecos as they must be thin-ned; a thins 'em." "Well," said she, "I think by-and-by you will know something of everything." "A manes ta, mam, a does. A bin a comin agin, he be, afore lang, an uz agwain ta putt ma hup ta musheroomin—at laste to puffy-balls an toudstools—'garrux,' he calls 'em—as ba fund i' thun oods an plaaices." "I think you'll be a very clever old gentleman then," said Nelly; "but I must be going, Aaron." "A thinks," said he, "a sholl, mam."

Jem had his turn, too, on another day, as to his share in parish matters, the working of divers spells, and the action of divers remedies; that, following in Aaron's wake, he had himself suggested, improved on, or invented; all of which, though of special interest to himself, was not so to others, and, therefore, need not be named.

Those Maidens Minchem, too, were still in force, and they elevated their respective noses, critically, when they were shown the pictures that Nelly painted—pictures that pleased her father very much, as he saw that her stay in Town had been of use to her, more so than he imagined. Lawson was much in the same state, half childish and rambling; and George, who was now as brisk as ever at the work, was talked of as the future husband of pretty Mary Moss.

Of course nothing could be said to the Lawsons, as to Jessie, until Anderson came

over; as he did not like to write to Nelly, he never having done so, except when pictures had been sold, or sent to him. As an additional incentive was now supplied for work—that future painting with him—Nelly soon settled down to it, hoping by the time he came, she should have something to show him in which he would see improvement. She still continued to paint home scenes, as he advised it, as being of more interest, and handy to her.

It was now the end of September; harvest had come and gone, and hop-picking was nearly over; and Mr. Hamilton and Frank, who had already been amongst the birds, were looking forward to more of it, and to coming pheasants; and with Harry Anderson for company, they hoped to make good bags.

At length came joyful news for Nelly. "We are expecting my nephew, Harry, to-night," said the Rector, "and, we hope, he will

stay some time, as he is anticipating some shooting with you and your brother, Mr. Hamilton; and he talks of sketching." "Yes," was the reply, "we trust we shall see a very great deal of him while he is with you, Mr. Arundell, for we like him much. He is a very nice gentlemanly man, and he has been exceedingly kind to Nelly. We owe him much."

He came, and saw, and conquered; for, taking an early opportunity to speak to Mrs. Hamilton of his sincere attachment to her daughter, Anderson, by his straightforward and manly manner, had but little difficulty in obtaining her consent for mention to be made of it to Mr. Hamilton.

The news was unexpected; but when he found it was no passing fancy, and Harry named his prospects and position—four hundred a year, independent of his profession—he—Mr. Hamilton—then gave consent for

them to be "engaged," with this proviso, to wait two years. If when that time expired they loved each other, and still thought they could do so all through life, why he should have her, as Laura would be able then to help her mother; "but," said her father, "if you take Nell from us, we must see her often, we do so love her; for a better child no parents ever had." "You shall," said Anderson.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CLUE, THE QUERY, AND THE STOLEN CHILD.

BEFORE leaving London, Anderson pressed upon Jessie the advisability of her return to Landimoor, for a time, at all events; and she agreed to do so, as soon as she heard from him that she was to come there; and she gave him the likeness for her brother George. Talking over the matter with Mr. Hamilton and Frank, they agreed with him that it would be best for him himself to break the news to Jessie's friends; and to tell them all he knew, from the time she

came to Dulwich to when they met again; and why since then he had befriended her, and kept it secret.

The risky part of the business as to her return home was, however, the chance of the old man breaking out again when he saw her; as, though they had not met for years, and he was queer, he was almost sure to know her; and to make him think that all was "but a dream" seemed rather visionary. They would ask the doctor what he thought about it, and so be guided.

"I suppose," said Mr. Hamilton to Mr. Burt, "there is not much to go by in such cases?" "But very little," was the doctor's answer. "The symptoms of softening, and of other chronic diseases of the brain, are obscure and varying; as the same symptoms may exist with different states of it, and also differ with the temperament. Still, that there is softening going on I am satisfied;

as the greater frequency of the convulsive attacks, and the consequent impairment of the memory, clearly indicate, coupled as they are with weakened intellect and increased low cunning. No, there is no hope, depend upon it. The brain is softening, and if he lives long enough he will die an idiot."

"It's very sad, poor fellow." "It is, indeed. It dates, I think, from many years ago—that blazing summer. He was loading in the hayfield, up at Applepatch, bareheaded, and so had sun-stroke for his stupid folly. I pulled him through it, but he was very queer; and ever since, a little thing has always set him going." "Then all that excessive irritability, from which his family had so long suffered, was in reality disease?" "Yes," said the doctor. "It was increased by the shock of the fire, and it has been since intensified by his own disposition and habits; and that New Year's Eve still

added further to it, as did the scene with George."

"What would you advise we should do in the matter, doctor?" "Well, the only thing which occurs to me, is to place him under the influence of morphia for a few days, so as to rest his brain, and get him a long sleep. Surrounding circumstances might then break the thread. But there is this awkwardness about it. If he retains that scene he had with George, about the windows, you won't deceive him; but you might do so, I fancy, were it not for the expense of again altering them. You know his cunning." "That shall not stand in the way then," said Mr. Hamilton, "for they shall be altered at once; or at least, as soon as your dosing has got him back up-stairs, and set him sleeping. Frank, my lad, will you see to it, and get the masons to dirty all the brickwork?" "I will," said he, "and also stick some cob-

webs in the corners; there are lots in that old barn." "There's that big rose bush too, down in the shrubbery; you can dig that up, and nail it by the door." "I will," said Frank, "to fix him."

That alteration was then carried out, while Lawson slept; Mary Moss watching by him to note all the doctor told her, and to allow of George and his mother attending to what was wanted. The morphia produced continued sleep, or dozing; so the doses then were in a few days lessened, and Jessie written for. She came next day, and it was a joyful meeting. The morphia was suspended, and a scheme devised.

"Mary will be here again directly," said Jessie, as the old man woke and found his hand in hers, "and then I will get your tea. You are better." He turned round quickly as he caught the voice, but Jessie sat in shadow. "I thought—I thought—yes, Mary's

very good. Who is it?"—"Jessie. What, wide-awake at last, and you not know me? Why, father!" "Go, go away," said he; "you're like them all; they trick me, tease me; they will drive me mad. She's in the water—d'ye hear—d'ye hear? I killed her!"

"Why, father, you've been dreaming; look up and see me." "I won't." "But, father, look, and satisfy yourself." He did. "You wicked girl! Your face is brown, and Jessie's face was white. I saw it at the window. You don't get over me." "What window, father?" "The one they stopped." "Oh, that is nonsense! why how you have been dreaming!" "They did, I say; George showed it me. Be off, I tell you!" She let it rest at that.

Next day they got him down, and took him out. It puzzled him. Jessie kept out of sight, and his son said nothing; but he saw his father looking at the tree; and then

he felt behind it, and went on through the wicket to the back, and stopped there at the window. "Can't make it out; can't make it out a bit!" "What is it, father?" "That window." "Yes," said George; "it is dirty, I know; but it was obliged to bide a bit till you were better." "Better?" "Yes, better. Why, just look here! Upon my word, they're cobwebs; so that will tell you how long you've been ill."

"Ill, ill? Let me think a bit; yes, think a bit: I must sit and think it out." "Well, sit here on the bench then, in the sun." He sat and thought. "But you said you had stopped it up—that window?" "You see it isn't." "But I saw her white face, and you said I killed her." "You have had some nasty dream that's bothered you."—"Yes, yes; it must be.—Let me think a bit." "Now don't get brooding, father, now you're better. You have been ill and rambling.

There's Jessie calling. Come now, let's go in." "No, no; I won't—she's dead: I know she's dead. I won't be tricked." "Well, here she is," said George; and Jessie came, her hair now curled all over, like when she left her home twelve years ago.

"I am so glad you are better, father. Come, tea is ready," and she sat beside him. "You have been so wandering, and said such strange things—you never knew your 'little curly-wig!'"—the name he had called her by in happier days.

That took him back to many years ago, before she left her home.—"It's like a dream," said he.—"Can't make it out!" "Yes, it is a dream." He tried to doubt again, but she drew him to her, and said, "Kiss me, father; I am your own daughter Jessie." He passed his hand first over, then beneath her mass of curls, and looked her in the face. She kissed him, and let her hair

lie there upon his shoulder. "Come, kiss me, father, for you know you love me."

"Oh, Jessie, Jessie! Oh, my child, my child—I see it now; it really was a dream!" cried he, then kissing her. "I dreamt I cursed you."—"No, no, not cursed me!" "I dreamt that you were deep down—in the water." "Oh, ugly dreams to vex you so; I'm here to wait, and tend you." "Then I did not curse you?" "Why, father, your own child!" "Thank God, thank God! Oh Jessie — kiss me, lass, I've been so frightened, I thought you went away, and then came back, and that——" "A dream, a dream—I am going to get you well. Now, let's go in; you lean upon my arm—you will soon be stronger. Come, come, dear father."

The impression was strengthened, and the difficulty then was for her to get away from him, even for a walk. He seemed to fear his

losing sight of her. But as there could not be any permanent improvement in him, he soon relapsed into the same sad state; though, Jessie being with him, turned his thoughts. Still, he was childish. She fixed to stay at home for some time yet; she could not leave them, for her mother and her brother were so kind.

With the two "engaged" ones the time passed pleasantly; and as the hop-picking was now over, a day was fixed for Ludlow; and as the last train to Newnham was at 3.55—too early for them to return—they, with Frank and Clara, decided to drive to Tenbury, and to go on thence by rail. They had a pleasant drive, there and back again, and Harry made his sketch; and they spent the day within the ruins and the castle grounds.

There was a deal, too, to be done at Eymor. Coveys to be thinned, pheasants to be potted, snipe and wild ducks to be blazed

at, rabbits to be ferreted, and a bit of cub-hunting to be had; and a vast deal of sketching and love-making to be got through by the pair of them—Anderson and Nelly.

As George Lawson was so often at the keeper's, and Mary was so often there, it was soon evident to Jessie that some time or other she had a chance of a sister-in-law; and so she and "rosy cheeks" were soon great friends. One evening that Mary was at Landimoor, Jessie showed her her book of photographs, and she saw the name in it—they had only called her "Jessie"—of "Jessie Jackson."

"Why, is your name Jackson! you are married then?" "Yes; but I have lost my husband, Mary, and my children." "Oh, what a pity! 'Jackson,' that's very funny, for that's my name, too."

"Why, Mary!" Jessie said, "they call you 'Moss.' I thought he was your father?"

"Not my right father—but he is my father," said she, as she was looking at the pictures. "Oh, that's my Jack! my very own old Jack." "What Jack?" "My Jack, who used to play with me, and draw me pictures." "Why, that's my husband, Mary!" "Is it? well it's just like Jack. Oh, and there's old Liz; she used to box my ears." "Well, it is a Liz, but that's my husband's sister." "Aye, but it's like old Liz—and oh, well I never—if that isn't me! but what a little one! How I have grown! But however did you get it?"

"Why, Mary," Jessie laughed, "whatever will you, my dear girl, say next? That's my husband's little sister—Polly Jackson. They lost her; she was stolen."

"Well, then, that's me! They took me off, and put me with the gipsies."

"Good God!" said Jessie, "is it possible? Can you be Arnold's sister?" "Yes, dear

old Arny; but we called him 'Jack.' Oh, where is he, and where are all of them, and do you know him?"

Without replying, Jessie said, "What's that?"—a view of Matlock. "Why, where I used to live, and go up on the hills, before they took me. I had a bed to sleep in then, a little white one; but I didn't after; they made me sleep without. But where's old Jack? I did so love old Jack!"

"Oh Mary! See here, who's this, and this?" "Why, that's my mother, and this one's my father; but I did not call them that. I called her my 'mamma,' and him 'papa.' But he has not got his glasses!" "What glasses?" "Some shiny ones; he put them on his nose when he was reading. He looked so funny!"

"Oh, my dear girl," said Jessie, kissing her, "thank God for this! You are indeed poor Arnold's 'little Polly,' and so, my sister.

Oh Mary, we will never, never part, now we have found each other. I wish he were alive, poor fellow, that I do!"

The sequel to this discovery was that Harry went to London—to Scotland Yard; Mary having told him that the nurse's name, who took her for that "nice ride," then left her, was "Emma;" sometimes they called her that, and sometimes "Jenny." He thought it out, went back to their first meeting—he and Arnold—when he heard it—his losing her; and remembering the flower girl and the scrimmage, put both together—"Emma Jinniver."

"Can you kindly assist me," said he, when he got to Charing Cross, "in an enquiry I wish to make about a person?" "What name, sir?" "Jinniver — Emma Jinniver; but it is fifteen years ago, too long I fear; a case of child stealing in '55." "We'll see, sir, if the name is on our books." He

—the Superintendent of police—then touched a bell, and gave his order. A book was brought—a big old bulky ledger. "J.—Jinniver. Here you are, sir, a lot of them. Gloucester, Melton, Worcester, Leominster, Maidstone, Matlock."—"That's it," said Anderson, "Matlock."

"Number six book, Barton." The book was fetched and brought. "I see it is an enquiry, sir," said the Superintendent, turning to it. "'Child missing; Mary Jackson, age ten; father a picture dealer, Helsham Square, and High Street, Matlock. Description: bright and pretty, with dark curly hair, hazel eyes, dimpled chin, and small mouth; lips pouting. A red round mark on the back, just by the shoulders, and the little toe on left foot growing in. Short for her age.'" "I'll take that down," said Anderson, and did so.

"'Was dressed when last seen——.'" "I

don't think that will matter." "Might probably allude to Jack, or Arny, and speak of Liz. Then it describes the girl—well, that won't matter, it's too long ago." "What came of it?" said Anderson. "Only suspicion, but it was a strong one; for I see she got it heavy — five years' penal. She robbed a man, and had been thrice convicted."

"Is she now living?" "I expect she is, sir. Here's the last entry — just twelve months ago, in '69. She was fined five shillings then for being drunk." "And what address?" "Well, she had addresses as well as aliases, but her right one was at her sister's—her sister Jane, a tidy woman, who took her in from pity, and who lived in the Bridge-road then,—Waterloo; rooms near a doll-shop." "I will make a note of it. I am much obliged to you." And Harry went there.

"Does a person named Jane Jinniver live here?" "Which it was her maiden name; she do, sir." "And her sister Emma?" "Which it was until last week, she did, sir; but unbeknown to us she drowned herself, so now she don't." "What made her do it?" "She lost her little girl—she strayed away o' Lord Mayor's Day, two year ago, a 'love child'—and her fretted, as she was useful to her, bein eight year old. It cut her up; an so, as her was allys frettin an a-cryin, she did a plunge in there, near Blackfriars Bridge. She got washed ashore in time, and now theyn burried her."

"Where is her sister?" "Oh, she stans the market, with apples, oranges, an things in sason. Youn find her at the Garden—further end; the second ooman on the left hand side." "What name?" "Jane Hardy. Her husband's in the Force—B 62; a day-

man." "What beat?" "Just now close at, sir—York-road and Stamford-street."

So then he left, and asked the first policeman that he met for Hardy. "This is the man you want, sir—the one who's coming. We meet at two here daily."

The man came up. "I seem to recognise your voice, my man, though I don't know you." Then Hardy told him about that little do, nine years ago, by Leicester-square. "I was on the Acre beat," said 62. "I know you now." "That little Jenny, sir, is now my wife. She lived anigh my cousin and his missis, in Crown Court, Drury Lane, with her old mother. Her mother died, and my poor woman also; so then we had each other. She was always tidy, sir, and so I liked her. She stands the market now, but then she 'button-holed'—sold flowers, sir. If you're going that way, sir, she p'raps might know you."

They had some talk, and then he went across to Covent Garden; saw her and chatted with her, and named Earl's Court, and then she knew him. That night at nine, when Hardy came off duty, he went and saw them both. She cried a deal about her sister, Emma, and said how odd it was she should have lost her child. It was also odd, she said, that the one—Arnold Jackson, whose sister was stolen by Emma, should have been the very one to protect her—Emma's own sister—that time when he and Mr. Anderson first met.

Proof now was thickening, and he returned.

Mary had in the meantime told Jessie all she could remember about her early days; and, in reply to questions as to why she did not try to get away when with the gipsies, she said she did; that twice, when she got off, the women beat her—Zibiah and Huldah; the third time stripped her, and set her standing there before the men, for them to smack

her, and to laugh and jeer. "I never felt so shamed in all my life," said Mary, blushing. "Young as I was, I felt I'd sooner die than they should serve me so. And so I stayed; and when I dare, I used to have a cry—that did me good—and watch the stars at night; and when I saw a larger one that twinkled, I'd think of Jack, my very dear old Jack, and cry again."

"And were they very rough?" said Jessie to her. "Oh, yes, at first; but soon I learnt to dance, and play the castanets and tambourine, and how to patter—talk to those I saw upon the race-course or on the road. I got on better because I was so quick, and used to step along on those high stilts, and go to every carriage. But they did not know, though, why I was so nimble: I was looking for old Jack and my mamma."

"And were they kinder then?" "They used to tease me; but I didn't mind them.

They called me 'Rawnee Polly' and 'Little Esmeralda,' and liked to see me get into a passion." "Were you, then, passionate?" "I was bound to be. The first time I let out was when they beat me—they had often done it at the fairs and races: they used to lash me if the money I had given me was too little; both Reuben Lee—that vile old 'Gipsy Jack'—and Lock. But one night, when they tried to strip me too—I was older then—to lash me all the harder, as I kicked them, I caught a knife up, and I hit Lock with it, right through the hand, and slashed Lee's face as well; then seized a brand and set the tent ablaze.

"I got it, though, for that—they hammered me; and then I said that while they slept I'd kill them, if they ever touched my clothes again or hit me. I made them fear me; so I got on better."

"How old were you then, Mary?" said

Jessie. "They told me I was 'ten' when first I came to them, so I was fifteen then—they bought me from our Emma—and when Rueb Lee tried all he could to marry me—though not his blood, and so, against their will, they said I was 'eighteen.' That was just before they set fire to the gorse—and I escaped. They all were drunk—the men and women too—that night. But that good old Moss found me, and took to me; and brought me with him when he moved from Enville. He was keeper to the Earl."

When Anderson found, from Jessie, that the mark and the peculiarity of the foot were present, all doubt was over; so it was then decided that the matter should be made known in the village, and Mary take her right name, Mary "Jackson." The villagers were delighted.—"Ony to think," said they, "our own Mary a turnin out a raal little laady. The Lord saave us!"

As Anderson had now not only to be a visitor at his uncle's, but also at Eymor House and Bickley, he had to promise he would remain at the Rectory until after Christmas; so it was a happy time for Nelly, and also in a measure for her cousin, as Harry's friend came over as he promised, and the acquaintance with Annie Hamilton was thus renewed; and, by the time Charles Cameron returned, the intimacy bid fair to be pleasant and permanent.

Nelly's progress in Art was now rapid, as she and Henry painted side by side, and pretty constantly; and, when he left, after New Year's Day, for Town, he took with him two more views of her's—home scenes—and arranged for her to then commence figure subjects—Jessie, and Mary too, offering to sit as models for her; and, as for children, when once the youngsters knew of it, each one there offered.

The first week in April, Harry was again there, his Academy pictures—"The Lleder Bridge" and "Bettwys" — having been finished and sent in; and, as there was a last meet of the hounds handy there—"Cobbler's Coppice" — on the Monday, it was arranged, as Frank had to go to a sale, that Harry should see to Nelly; and that Bob should stay at home till the Tuesday morning, to witness the "throw off."

CHAPTER X.

BOB WINS THE BRUSH, AND NELLY GETS A WETTING.

THE meet at Cobbler's Coppice was a large one, and hounds soon found. "Gone away!" shouted Tom Robertson, who was well in by the hedgerow, as the fox dropped through it. "Gone away!" he cried, as the varmint took up the stubble, with his head up and his brush out, to show he meant it. "Hark halloa!" cried somebody in the cover; and "Forrard! forrard! hoick forrard! forrard on!" said Will, as the foremost hounds came pressing through the briers, and Sam thonged hangers; "we're right for Thissleton!"

And as the leading hounds laid themselves out for work, and the rest cleared the cover, "Hoick together there!" cried Will; "have at him, hoick!" and amidst much pounding and stick-cracking, on came "the field," tearing up the stubble like a charge of cavalry.

"Mind how you come, Miss Hamilton," said Harry Anderson, giving her a lead over as they followed the ruck of them; "and that's right, Nell; well jumped," said he, as the rest went away from him, and the two were together again, she on her beloved Saucy Boy, and he on Firefly. "Isn't this glorious?" said she, flushed with the excitement of it, and with the pace at which hounds were going. "Splendid," was his reply. "Hold him up! darling; it's awkward."

But Saucy Boy knew both how to pick his legs up and how to bring them under him;

and taking the pleacher steadily, he landed his fair rider in the meadow, and then went for the rails. "Hi, over!" said Harry, as he dropped into the fallow field, and she followed him. "There go the hounds, then —yonder; do you see them?" And as he pointed with his whip towards them, the clouds broke up, and sent a broad white sheet of sunshine down upon them; and as they looked, the pack raced out of it for Oakham Hills.

"Where's that lad Bob got, I wonder?" "Home by now," said his sister, "I should hope." "A check! by all that's lucky," said Anderson, as he saw the hounds swing round, and feather, and then stand stock still. "Come on, Nell; now's our time." And the two steeds tore alongside on the turf, and reached the hounds just as they picked up the scent again; and then bore

down well together for a slingity bit in the flat—a withy bed.

"Brook-work!" said Anderson, as he caught sight of the water; and, "Oh, how jolly!" was Nell's comment at the thought of it. "You won't get in if we have it?" said Harry. "You must fish me out if I do." "But you might be drowned!" "Then you must bring me to life again." "In the way you did me at the rails, I suppose?" "Don't you be saucy. Oh, you wicked fellow!" said she, "to pretend, as you did then, that you were hurt so badly." "I could not help it," Harry said; "my darling, when you kissed me."

When they got to the water, though, they found that it was not only full wide for a jump, but that there was no take-off about it, for trees and bushes; and as they did not care to pelt on up the meadows, as the

rest were then doing, when there was a foot-bridge handy, they decided to walk the plank.

"It's rather a risky piece of business, Nell," said Harry, "as it is awfully narrow, and the noise"—it was close to a fall—"might startle them." "Oh, never fear; we shall do it," she said, "well enough. Give me a lead, and mine will follow. Won't you, Saucy Boy?" and she patted him. So Harry got off and led over; and then fastening his horse to a gate, came back for Nelly.

It was a one-plank bridge, with side rails slanting outwards; and taking hold of the reins, as she would not dismount, he had just got half-way over it, when a nail catching in her habit, she checked her horse.

The movement was fatal, for coming against the side, Saucy Boy got his leg over, and his weight broke the rail down; and with a startled cry of "Oh, Harry!" into the water

they went; and before Anderson had scarcely time to think, they were under the bridge below him, and over the fall together, she luckily having kept her seat.

Away he sped like a deer! and racing down the side of the brook, and taking his coat off as he ran, went into it a header; and being a good swimmer, soon came up with them, as they were drifting into the bushes.

"Oh, my dear girl!" began Anderson, as with one arm round her waist, and the other at the reins, he piloted her to the side—the water there being wider, and so, shallower; but Nell, bursting out laughing before he could finish his sentence, said, "Now don't. You're a very good fellow, you know, to come after me in this way, but we can't make a sensation-scene of it, for it's not deep enough. What a jolly accident! We came over that fall delightfully.

"But oh," said she, noticing his condition, "I am so sorry; and you without your coat, too; you will have such a large cold! Why, you are as wet as possible." "It was rather damp, certainly, in there," said Harry. "But did I pull you in?" "No, I took a header." "Oh, how nice," said she, "and I missed it! Why, it must have been like the 'Colleen Bawn.' But I say, Harry, you are wet, though, that you are. Poor fellow! and it was so good of him, yes it was!

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do—the hounds are away by this, so we'll have a jolly gallop home, and that will dry us, won't it now?" "Agreed," said he, "or else you will catch cold." So running up to the gate for Firefly, who had been quietly munching green boughs, he picked up his coat and was soon in the saddle again; and away they went, merrily.

"Oh, your hair is so wet," said she, as

they cantered along up the meadow, "and your moustache, too!" "Is it?" said he, as they then turned out of it into a snug green lane, where the banks were yellow with primroses, and the birds were singing; "I could dry that if I thought it was of any use." "If you are to get so very naughty," said Nelly—being tolerably quick of comprehension—"I don't really know what I shall do with you!" "No," said Harry, "it is difficult to divine, is it not? Well, I'll dry it on the chance, then;" and before they had got out of the lane, he found—he had not had his trouble for nothing!

Luckily it was a lovely April day, and bright and sunny; and the warm sun, and the gallop home, soon made them—for it was a merry journey—all of a glow, and so past catching cold.

"It will be good-bye, now, to hunting," said Harry, as they rode up the avenue,

"for I must get to Town next week, and know if my two pictures are accepted; but we'll have another gallop, won't we, Nell, when autumn comes?" "I hope so," was her answer, "and some good ones." "I suppose Bob is back?" "I trust he is," said she, as they turned in at the gateway.

But Bob, who had so far obeyed orders as to turn tail most reluctantly, when he heard "the find" the other side the coppice, no sooner saw that the hounds were again near him, after they had killed their fox, than he turned the head of Dapple Grey, and went towards them. In five minutes more, they were in the cover, and they found at once—and Bob careered through space.

"Who's that lad in the front?" said Blissett, as the hounds went away up the fields, pointing for the hills again. "How the fellow goes! He means catching the fox

himself, I fancy." "Yes, it certainly looks like it by the pace of him, confound him! I think it is young Bob Hamilton, Jolly John's son—a lad of fourteen—by the grey he is on; I saw him by the cover at the find." "Well, he can go, that's certain, George." "He can," said Dick. "Hold up, horse!" and, with a near miss for a purler, he dropped over the rails into a sheep-pasture; and scoured along as hard as he could pelt for the ash-beds, with Dawson by him.

"Mind the twigs, old fellow," said Blissett, as he jumped the plank-stile from the meadow, and ducked as he did it; "it's awfully thick up the bank here;" and, with his whip-hand before his eyes, he pressed through the withy boughs; and, meeting with a lucky gap at the top, slid down from the boundary-fence to the holloway below it.

Through the gate went the pair of them,

and up the common through the gorse bushes, with hounds in full cry, and horsemen and footpeople about in all directions. "This is grand," said George. "How the scent lies!" "Glorious," said Blissett, "the pace is splendid;" and easing their horses just a trifle at the steepest part of the common, they reached the top of it, where you look down into the dingles; and then raced along the turf for the fallows.

"By Jove!" said Dick, "that lad is still ahead, and going, too — there — he's down! No, he's on again. What a plucky young beggar it is! He must be deucedly well mounted to go like that," said he, as he pelted along the adland, and George did a furrow beside him. "If hounds throw up, though, he'll be into them. Come along, old man! a lad like that ought not to keep the lead." But though they rode the faster, they made no play, for the hounds in-

creased their speed; still—Bob was with them!

"Who is that with the hounds—there, all alone?" said the Master, as he and several others came up to them while they were bungling at a puzzle-lock. "He goes like an old stager, yet looks like a youngster." "Young Bob Hamilton, my lord. He got the lead, and keeps it." "So I see, Blissett. He is a good plucked one, evidently. Confound those locks; they are worse than wire! Cannot you open it? Let that man try. Lift at the hinge-post, my man; don't bother with the lock. That's it; thanks," said his lordship, as a grinning rustic forced back the gate and loosed through the lot of them." "Pitch him a coin, Daventry," said the Captain; "he was a friend in need, for that fence was a stopper." "The pace is too good, Darcy. I will think of him in my will."

"Hillo!" said the Major, "there are two

down at the heaver." "And one at the rails makes three, Murray. There will be plenty more before we have done with it;" and he had no sooner said the word than over his lordship went, tripped-up by an ant-hill." "That's one to the Master," said Murray, laughing. "All right, Major," was the reply, "and no bones broken." "Spin along, then!" said Murray, "for we're in for a good one;" and as they gave their horses a breather up the downs, and got to the top of them, the hounds were fields ahead—but Bob was with them!

"Why, that's the same lad who cut out the way for us from the cover!" cried Paul Hughes, with astonishment, as he saw Bob still in the front, and in the next field to hounds. "He will take the shine out of us fellows, that's very certain; for no hunt-fox can live long at this pace. By the powers, then, there he is! there's the fox—look!—

yonder; with his brush down, skulking up the hedgerow. Ah! good hounds!" said he, as he saw the pack streaming along, with heads up and sterns down, and evidently viewing him; "they'll run into him now before we reach the brook."

But the fox got law at the hedge, and on the other side of it the distance widened.

"How they do go," said Dick; "the deuce is in it! They'll kill him and eat him, and the lad, too, before we can get a sight of it. There; it's all over," said he, taking a pull at his horse as the music ceased; and as they jumped the fence, down in the meadow beyond the brook, the hounds were worrying—and Bob was with them!

"Well done, youngster!" said the Master, as he cantered down the slope; "he shall have the brush, for he has well earned it; for the brook we are coming to, Murray, was a sticker for the finish, for a lad like that."

And as soon as he and the leading horsemen had managed to negotiate it, they came up to him; Will, the huntsman, having in the meantime, by hard riding, rescued the remains of the fox, and coached the hounds off.

"Young Mr. Hamilton, I think?" said his lordship, as he lifted his cap to him.

"Yes, sir—Bob," was that young worthy's reply, as he stood by his panting grey, and looking red at the honours awaiting him.

"Well, you have gone famously, sir; straight and well! Barnes, the brush; and I have much pleasure," said he, as Will cut it off and gave it him, "in presenting you with the brush."

"But I have no coat-pocket put to it in!" said Bob, turning round and showing that both skirts were gone, and his coat cut down to a jacket.

"Well," laughed his lordship, "then put it in your hat, you plucky lad."

"But I have lost that too!" said Bob, looking as rueful as possible, with his scratched face and his hair all about, and his necktie wrong side before and one end flying.

"Then we will hang it to your saddle-bow. Barnes, see to it. And here, Mr. Hamilton, obligé me, please, with putting that in your pocket, for fresh skirts and a new hat. I never saw a lad go better in all my life." And to Bob's intense astonishment, Lord Daventry handed him two sovereigns, from sheer admiration of the way he went.

"Well, you are a nice object, you are!" said his father, when Bob returned, bare-headed. "Yes, pa," was his reply; "but do you see this?" said he, as he rode up to him and exhibited the brush; "and this?" as he dismounted and showed the two sovereigns. "I won it, pa; and they gave me that for getting it."

"What does it all mean?" said his father, who, in spite of ocular demonstration, was still incredulous. "You Bob—you win the brush! You are not telling me a lie, I hope?"

"No, pa."

"But how on earth did you hold on to her?"

"Don't know, pa."

"But you have never jumped her, my lad, to my knowledge."

"No, pa; but she jumped me to-day, and that did as well."

"The fact is, pa," said Bob, feeling that he must forthwith unbosom himself, "Dapple Grey bolted, and she ran away with me; and as I found I could not stop her, I stuck to her, and—no one caught me! You won't split, though, will you, pa?"

"Not I, my lad," said his father, laughing, and delighted beyond measure at the young-

ster's pluck, and the unexpected realisation of his own theory. "Always go straight, always go straight, my boy, and then you will grow up a credit to your father, and be a blessing to him. Here, here's a sovereign for you; put that to the others. I'll buy you a new hat, my lad; I'll buy you a new hat, and a coat. I'm proud of you; and I'll ask friend Addison for a week's holiday for you.

"But I say, Bob, you dog! it was well for you she was a huntsman's mare, and knew her business, or you would have been into the hounds to a certainty. However, it was a good thing you had your sticking-trousers on. You have a seat, it seems, so now get hands; and if we can only coax Charles to ease your lessons a bit when the cubbing comes, so as to potter about with them, you'll be able to show decently next season, if we can get you a day or two;

and then you know—why, by Jove! my lad, they'll believe in you!"

Which they did; for Bob, during the next Midsummer holidays, tackled the old mare to such purpose, under his father's tuition, that when the season came, and he got a day from school occasionally, he kept his hands down, and went a good one.

"Come in, my boy, come in," continued his father. "Your sister and Mr. Anderson have been back a long time. You have beaten her, Bob, any way; for she has been into a brook and got a wetting. Here, Nell! Frank! Mr. Anderson! mother! here's the winner, then; Bob's got the brush!

"Now, mother," said he, as he showed him up, "was I right or was I not? That's pluck and muscle, that is—pluck and muscle!" And it was a happy day for Mr. Hamilton.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.—A TIMELY RECOGNITION.

"WELL, George," said Frank Hamilton, one day, when they were together down at Landimoor, soon after Bob had thus distinguished himself, and Lawson had driven him back to school after his week's holiday, "I think it is a good thing the season is now over, or that young imp of ours would have broken his neck. What a lad it is! They say he went like an old stager; but how he managed it I can't make out. I wish I had been there myself, but I was up at Carter's sale."

"Things sold well I hear, sir." "Yes," was the reply, "too well for me to buy, though there were some prime straight-backed ones amongst them. Sheep, too, were high, and the horses fetched a lot of money; but they were a good team, well matched and even." "Many there, sir?" "Yes, well attended, and some heavy buyers. I heard mention made too of a friend of yours—John Lewis." "Did you, sir? Well, if he isn't a friend, I won't call him an enemy." "No," said Frank, "for I don't think, after what transpired, you ought to do so." "You mean, sir, about the fire—what the doctor told them at the Feast, last summer, there up at the 'Crowing Cock?'"

"Yes, George; he named it there, and I know it's true; for the governor on the next Board Day inquired about it, and the master told him." "Yes sir," said Lawson, "I went to Upperton and asked Gill, myself;

and I also saw the doctor, and the master. It's odd, too, that it should be so, now isn't it, sir?" "Well, yes it is; for coupled with Lewis's threat to be 'revenged,' and the fact that your father turned him out that night, and but just before the cry of 'fire!' was heard, circumstantial evidence was certainly very strong against him.

"It only shows, however, that we must not always, George, judge by appearances. I find that also by your sister Jessie. Now he himself—I never named it to you—told me that night—the night we caught him in the stubble poaching—that he saw her with a gentleman at Liverpool, and watched them leave together by the steamer—the 'Scotia;' yet that gentleman, it now seems, was her husband; but he, not knowing it, thought badly of her, fond even though he then was of your sister. He rushed too quickly to conclusions, George.

"I had no means to test the truth one way or other, as I never knew her; and therefore I decided not to tell you, as, if proved true—that is, as he supposed—you would not have thanked me; and if his tale was false, I should only then have raised hopes she was living. Besides, that handkerchief was then a puzzler; and I fancied, when afterwards I came to think it over, that Lewis was mistaken, although he swore to me that since then, recently, he had met her on Barnes Common."

"No, that was true, sir, for she told me of it." "Well, anyway, you see now how it was I did not tell you. I neither wished to hurt your feelings, George, by naming what we have since found would be false, nor did I wish to raise false hopes that she might still be living. So I thought it best to let it be, and wait events; and now I am glad I did so." "It was much the best,

sir, every way," said George. "It was," said Frank, "as things have since turned out; but had you injured Lewis I should have blamed myself; for with Jessie living, and with what we know, I can see what your own feelings would have been, had he been killed when you rushed him frantically at that old quarry."

"Don't, don't sir, please! What did you hear about him?" Lawson said. "That he had come down in the world dreadfully; so much so, that he was acting as a drover in the cattle market, on market days, in Worcester, and all the week besides hanging about as odd man at some stables." "I am very sorry for it," George replied. "They were saying at the sale he joined some gipsies —well, that we know,—but that now they had driven him, because a horse he had to sell for them was lost. So I expect the horse he then was riding, that day at Hurcot,

belonged to them." "I expect it did, sir. He knew them, evidently, as when he called to them they tried to stop me—that was in Broom Lane, sir."

"I should like to know what came of him," said George, "and I should like to see him, too; to own we were mistaken, and that we judged him wrongly as to that big fire, and about things since. I have asked concerning him a many times in Worcester and elsewhere —Bromyard and Bewdley, Hereford and Ludlow; and Kidderminster, too, when in the fruit market; but no one seemed to know him: he was like forgotten—that's how it seemed, sir. But I'll ask again when I go in to Worcester—this week or next. I shall be sorry if he's come to grief, poor chap."

"How is your father to-day, George?" "Oh, much about the same, and thank you, sir; but as well as he will be, I expect." "I fear so too; the doctor says he has soften-

ing of the brain, and there is no cure for it. Does he still know Jessie?" "On and off he seems to, sir; but not regularly."

"Well, we tricked him nicely." "We did, sir; but do you know at times he still remembers all about that window, though it has been re-opened. It was only yesterday that he asked Jessie—you know she is rather brown—when her face was 'white:' and if she did not look in at the window. She said, 'What window?' 'It's not there now,' said he, 'George took it. He's put it out of sight, because it was a dream. He said it was — an ugly one; it frightened me; and so it's not there now;' — though there it was before him. He seems to mix it up so, and can't just yet forget it. However, if he does go back to it, he so jumbles it up, that he can't make anything of it; and so we let him run on, and don't interfere with him. It only makes him angry if you

cross him." "Quite the best way," said Frank, "to humour him."

"Is it true that you are going to get married, George? I heard as much; to Mary." "Well, I don't know as to that, sir. I know she likes me, but Moss won't hear of it. He says he cannot spare her. But if ever we do have each other, it won't be for some time yet, sir; not perhaps as long as father's living. I rather feared the news, though, would have changed her; but it has not. She is just the same as when she was Mary Moss. It seems so odd, to call her Mary 'Jackson.' How curious too, that they should be related!"

"Yes, it's odd how things work round; and it mostly happens when it's least expected." "She is getting quite a clever little lady," said George, delighted. "Jessie has got a lot of books, and she reads with her; Moss has a lot too, for he is a great hand

at bookwork, but she has been all through his long ago. In fact, for some time before Jessie came home, she used each week to bring books back from Worcester, to read, and take them in again each Saturday. I often used to laugh at her, the things she read; but so that it was reading, it did not much matter to Mary what it was; she would sit and read it all. It was some Lending Library she got them from, sir, at a penny a week a book; so it didn't cost her much, did it, sir?" "No," said Frank, "and though I daresay a lot of it was rubbish, it was better than nothing." "Tales she went in for most, sir, and something dreadful."

"Oh, she did, did she? Well, her own adventures, if we knew them all, would do to print." "So she says herself, sir, and that she would write them if she could but put them down. But Jessie now is getting her to read what's more useful, and I think

she will soon get on." "That she is sure to do," said Frank, "she is sharp, and quick, and notices." "So she does, sir. Why look at her now, and see what she was when you and I first knew her, sir. Why, when you took Moss on as keeper, sir — when old George Brown was shot—she didn't know a thing but gipsy patter, and she could scarcely write her name. But how should she, sir, when she was but a child when that girl stole her?"

"A lucky steal for you, George, if you have her. But she was always sharp, though. That was just why mother made her market-girl." "That going to Worcester, too, sir, did her good. She sat the market, with ears and eyes wide open." "Yes, it is not always what one learns at school, but what we pick up when we face the world, and rub against each other, that brings the knowledge. My mother wished to give the mar-

keting to someone else, but Mary would not let her. She thought with what we knew, she would not like to; but Mary said, as poultry was her hobby, she hoped we would let her go on just the same. It was a little out too for her. So we did."

"It shows her sense, sir," George said. "Though she has had to change her name, that's all the change; she is 'little Mary Moss' as much as ever. I like 'Moss' best myself; I don't like 'Jackson.'" "Then change it, George, to 'Mrs. Mary Lawson.'" "Some day I hope to, sir, if I have luck, for Jessie's very fond of her, and so is mother." "Well, if your father dies, you can be our tenant. We shall not move you, if you then like to stay; the governor has said so." "I am much obliged, sir, to you both," said Lawson; "for it's a handy little place, and the rent is low."

"Is your sister in, George?" said Frank,

as they came on up the bank from the brook. "I think not, sir; she was not when I left. I think she is with Miss Ellen." "Oh, very likely. Nell said she should be painting all the morning. I expect she has got her there to put in the finishing touches. She must bring it down to show you—you will say it's like her—and that of Mary too. They are two good heads. She wants to finish them to take to Town. She goes next month with mother." "Will you come on up to the house, sir?" "Not now, George, for that's the butcher's horse, by the sound of him; and I sent word by his lad Obe he was to call on me when he came to the Rectory; so I will be getting on. I want to sell him those two cows, Spot and Pretty Maid, if the price will do." So on Frank went.

"Well, Master Webb," said he, as he got up to the house, and met old Jem, "and

what have you got there?" "Eels, sur, eels; some fur Miss Nelly. A alleys looks, I do, ta gie hur the fust pickin on 'em, sur; they be jist in." "Much obliged, I am sure, Jem. What, it's that time, is it? We shall have the nightingales now, then. I saw some peewits this morning, and some swallows."

"Is, sur, an toime for 'em, as the martens be come. Ween be gittin the tothers soon now—them theer swifts—an the sand-martens. Them swifts dunna gie us much o' theer company though, sur, fur they be the last ta come an the fust to goo; an perhaps an mebbe it be bast, as they be screechers, an offen disturbs ma when uz thinkin. Though theym usefulish in theer waay, they be; as they knocks aboot, random loike, an scutters roun the tower awhin theer's tampest comin; an a gits ma rod at that, an hucks it, cos a knows the peerch be roisin. A don't loike

thunder, though, I don't. It be sa niesy. But God Amoighty wills it, so we has it."

"Yes," said Frank, "I suppose that's about the right way to reckon it up, Jem. So it's eel time again, is it? Well, you'll be busy." "Is, sur; them an the swallers, and the pewits—theer's a lot on 'em, sur, i' that poor bit o' Papworth's—and the nightingaales runs tagither, they does, the thray on 'em. A thinks, sur, theer'l be a largish taakin o' eels this atoime, they boites sa free." "Those are nice ones you have there," said Frank, looking at them. "They ool be, sur, whin a putts em in the tank ta mud 'em; they ba silvery." "How does Aaron get on, Jem; has he got over all the hard names yet?" "No, sur, a hanna; uz gid it hup, fur a conna spake em; so uz inwented naames uzself, an a keeps the paaper fur the mon a sals to. Them garrux as he be a workin

be quaare, sur, but varry pratty; orl sorts o' colours loike. A fund a lot on 'em, he did, in thun autumn."

"How about the bats, Jem?" "Well, sur, it's a puzzler. Uz fished now for thirty year or moore; but a niver fished fur bats. A didna think, no, a didna, o' fishin i' thun ar, a ony thought o' waater." "No; I dare say not," said Frank. "Well, they will soon be in too, I suppose?" "Is, sur, a ool; they comes in wi' the trout, sur; 'sept them long-eared uns, an they be come. A cotched some on 'em, he did, two or thray weeks agoo, on the sallies; they comes in o' Palm Sunday, sur, fur the moffs, as be hon the catkins—them yaller things, sur, they loikes 'em; an they be sa fond on em—that be the moffs uz a mentionin on, sur—as they staays ta long at em, till arter the sun be hup—loike, in a manner o' spakin, a mon as gits houd on a good tap, an conna lave it—an the bats as

inna it gone ta baad, they has 'em. The moffs goo in fur the blossoms, an the bats goos in fur the moffs, an Jem goos in fur the bats wi' the burdock, sur, an so a has'm. The thing works round yer sis, sur; they be arter ache other.

"Them tumblin bats be the rummest, them as comes in wi' the cockchay-fers, sur, as they feeds on. They be loike tumbler-pigeons, an turns head-over-hales a good un; but they be as nisy as swifts. Yer con hear 'em a squakin lang enough afore they comes. They be the big uns, sur, the biggermost o' orl, an they floys thun highest." "Oh," said Frank. "Well, how are Aaron's lot—his patients?" "Purty well, sur, purty well. Uz a maakin some rar cures, so a saays. A be clavver in his waay, he be." "Yes, I suppose he is. You can do a drop of cider?" "An thank yer sur, a could." "Come in then. Mother! here's Jem Webb

brought some eels. Will you see to him? Here's Garlick coming."

"Well, butcher, are you open to make a deal to-day?" "We'll see what the figure is, sir. The quality I know will do, if that will." "All right. We will have some cider, then, and go down to them. How did the sheep cut up?" "Oh, fairish, sir." "I am glad he's gone, he was always in the way; but I had something to do to get that lad to part with him."—Flood, it seemed, had gone the way of all mutton.—"'Put him in your pocket, Tom,' I said, months ago, but he wouldn't. However, he has come to knowledge now, and is all the richer. The wretched animal used to come and scrooge against our tops, on hunting mornings, and take the gloss off. He got quite a nuisance.

"Here's another nuisance, too," said Frank, turning to the magpie, who, was perched in the cage above them, with his head on one

side, listening to all they said. "Peter, you scamp! what do you say in the season?" "Got the brush—Tally O! Had a purl—down again!" "And what does old Joe say?" "Ah! look at that!" said Peter. "And who teases you in a morning when she comes to work?" "Pritchett, Pritchett—oud mother Pritchett!" "He's learnt his lesson, sir." "He has," said Frank. "But he knows too much. You can't do with a magpie, can you?" "Not I," said Garlick. "Will you have some more cider?" "Not a drop, sir, thank you. Where are those beasts?" "In the long meadow—we will go down and see them." So they started; Peterkin firing a parting shot at the butcher, in his exclamation of "Moo, baa, kill cauf!"

On the next Saturday, George Lawson went to market, and put up as usual at the "Hope and Anchor," in Newport Street; but although, being handy to the Cattle

Market, it was as likely a place as anywhere for him to hear tidings of Lewis, he did not hear anything; neither there, nor in the market. There had been a drover, "Jack" they called him—hanging about there for some weeks, but they knew nothing about him. They thought he had done coming, for he was too hard-up to trust.

Lawson was late that evening, for a man who had to pay him some money, never came; and he had waited nearly three hours longer than he otherwise should have done, hoping he might still turn up; so that when he got to Broadwas, it was very dusk. As he wanted to see Flemming at "The Oak" there, he drove up, flung the reins to the man, and went in.

"I will just have one glass, Mrs. Flemming, please, and draw a jug for your man; he is holding my horse." "It isn't our man," said the landlady, "he is up in the orchard.

It's a tramp, a stranger; but he won't have it if I do, for he was in just now, and asked for a drop of tea in a jug, instead of beer, and he'd pay me for it." "You don't often get customers of that stamp?" "No, they wouldn't do for us. However, he had it, and I said he was welcome to it, and the toast as well, for he didn't look as though he was over-burdened with coppers. We get a good many of 'em on this road, but we can't relieve 'em all."

By the time George came out it was nearly dark, and giving sixpence to the man, and wishing Flemming good-night, he got up in the covered cart and started. But before he had got round the corner, the landlord called after him—he had left his change on the counter; so, turning back again, he and Flemming had a laugh about it, and then off he went.

Just before he got level with the church

he had to pull up sharply—it was the man who had held his horse; he was lame and hobbling. "Beg your pardon, sir," said he. "All right, my man. What, are you lame?" said Lawson. "Foot-sore, sir." "Not the road-man, is it?" "No sir." "I thought I knew the voice. How far are you going?" "To the Bridge, sir, if I can get there." "Well, jump up then, and I will put you down; I am going by there myself." "Thank you, sir, I will; it will help me on."

So he got up into the cart with difficulty. Seeing the man's pipe was out, "You want a light?" said George. "Here, light from mine;" and the pipes were put together. As the glow from them was reflected on the fellow's face, "Good God," cried Lawson, "why, it's you, John Lewis!" "It is," was the reply, "and now I know you. I am at your mercy, George; but I never wronged you."

"I know you did not, Lewis. Shake hands, will you? It has all come out. I have asked about you often—ever since, to say what I say now. I wronged you, John. The man who fired our ricks died in the workhouse; and Jessie's come back home. The one you saw her with at Liverpool was her own husband. He's dead—her children too; and when you met her that day on the common, she was with her husband's friend, who has been a brother to her. We know him."

"Thank God for that!" said Lewis. "And tell her, George, from me, I ask her pardon for what I said that day. I had been on the drink a week. I hope she's well?" "She is, John, thank you. Well, this meeting's strange!" "It was to be."

So then, as he drove on, John Lewis told him all about himself.

When George called to him, the day they

jumped the quarry, he was lying half-stunned in the gorse, and heard him, but feared to speak. He said he felt his own horse hit the side, and then he fled. He lay still where he was, till dusk; then creeping round, he found, as George did, where the quarry opened. He clambered up the soil, and then got into it. The horse lay dead.

He took the saddle off, and then the bridle, and brought them, with his hat and whip, away; and carried them at dark up to the camp—there in Broom Lane. They swore he had sold the horse, and searched his pockets; then got him down, and all set on to him, and beat him badly, and drove him from the camp. That night he spent on one side Harboro' Common, and at daylight got away. But the news soon spread; and though he tried at all the camps about, they would not have him.

Since then he had lived, in fact, just how

he could, and got from bad to worse; but still kept honest. He had jobbed about some time, and slept in stables; was now done up, tired out and footsore; and with but sixpence in his pocket, besides the one George gave him. "I am sorry for you, John; that's over now. I'll see you righted." "Too late, George, thank you. Drink's been my ruin, and I missed my chance. But I have not touched a drop for some five weeks, and don't intend to; though I've changed too late."

"Not a bit of it, John," said Lawson. "If you will stick to that, you'll pull through yet. Now look here, I shall be this way again on Monday; it's the Fair. When we get to the Bridge, I will pay for a bed for you, for to-night and to-morrow night, and for your meals as well." "I don't wish that," said Lewis. "But I shall." "When you see me in the light, you won't name

'bed.' The tallet's my place, and I'd rather go there. They would not take me in; I'm far too ragged." "You shall please yourself, but I'll see that you're well fed."

So when they reached the inn at Knightsford Bridge, George saw the landlord; and telling him that the man who was with him had seen better days, and was also one he knew, he arranged for him to have a good supper, and his meals till Monday; and to let him have—as when he came to look him over he thought it was of no use asking for a 'bed'—a snug warm corner up there in his hayloft. "Now you make your mind easy, John," said Lawson; "go in for a good supper, old fellow, and try to sleep soundly. You'll be warm, at least, there.

"Then in the morning have a thorough wash, and—you see the church, here?—when the bell rings out, turn in, and pray for better days; they'll come, John, yet—I'll help you.

And after dinner, go up on the hill—you know it?—Ankerdine; and sit you down and think. You'll go to bed a better man for doing so. Then meet me here on Monday, say at 10." "I'll walk on, George, for Doddenham." "Well, as you like, and come with me to Worcester. I'll rig you out with two suits, and some clothing, and new boots, too"—"God bless you, George!"—"and take you on to Leigh, to see your uncle—he is ill in bed, and can't see to the farm—and tell him everything. I will get him to have you. He has no one he can trust; you'll see he will."

"Not while this world lasts, George! He's done with me. He warned me long ago about the drink—I laughed at him." "Then if he won't, I'll take you back with me, and see the master. He'll put you on to something, never fear." "George," Lewis said, "I feel this was to be. From this night

forth I'll be a different man. God bless you!" And so they parted.

When Lawson reached home, and told Jessie all about it, and that, to give him a chance, he meant to spend ten pounds on him in a good rig-out, she at once said, "and I'll be ten pounds too, for pocket-money, to keep him to it. I wish him well."

Jessie, it should be said, had a little money of her own, to settle her down at home; and that she should be no pull upon them, Anderson had made her accept fifty pounds; fifteen of it to buy her a strong useful pony, which Frank knew to, and five for the purchase of some poultry, and some pigeons, as a nucleus for money-making and occupation; she having already taken great interest in the doings in that line of her "sister" Mary. She had, therefore, thirty left. Nelly gave her an old side-saddle and a bridle, and she made herself a skirt;

and, as she had had a pony of her own when at Brooklyn, it made the present a lesser contrast to the past; and with her pony, and her fowls, and her pigeons, to pet and to fad with, and the ability to canter about as she pleased, the craving that she had for a town life soon lessened, for all in Eymor were kind to her. They knew her story, and were sorry for her; and Nelly was as a sister.

Lewis's uncle, Luke Solloway, was known to Mr. Hamilton, and was indeed indebted to him for former kindness. This George knew, so he went up to the house on the Sunday—next day, and saw Mr. Hamilton, who gave him a letter to take with him; and which letter contained a request that, as a personal favour, and as some return for what he had in times past done for him, he would now give Lewis a chance, and take him on the farm; and, if he

turned out steady, keep him there, if he could manage it.

The next morning, Jessie said, "George, will you take me with you? I should like to see him." "If you wish it, I will," said Lawson; and they left together. George called at the Bridge Inn, found Lewis had been seen to, and paid the bill. At Doddenham they came up with him, and his pleasure at seeing Jessie was unmistakable. "John! there's my hand," said she. "let by-gones be by-gones. I wish you well." "And so do I wish you," was his reply: "and I ask your pardon for what passed that day. Look here." A dirty paper pulled from his inner pocket was then opened. "Ten years ago you gave me this at Chelsea. It has never left me." It was her own likeness.

He crept in under cover, out of sight—he knew his rags had no right in the front; but when they left for Leigh, he left well

dressed; like what he was at Longlands; and he had a good big parcel with him.

When they got to Bransford, where George got down awhile to see the miller, they heard old Luke was worse; and on reaching the farm they found that it was true. However, he saw both George and Jessie. George he knew well, but Jessie he had not seen for many years—not since she was sixteen, when she had been there—Sunnyside—on a visit with his niece.

He heard all they had to say, and he read the letter. He was glad, he said, that it was now proved his nephew had no hand in the fire, and he was sorry for him; but he did not believe in his mending, and he would not have him; nor would he even see him—he knew not he was in the room below.—Everything was going to rack and ruin. His men he was sure were robbing him; the navvies were playing the deuce

with his fences, and letting the cattle out; and it was all going to the dogs together. He was a poor lone man, and they took advantage of him.

"Then why not," said Lawson, "have your own flesh and blood about you, to look after things. You have an outlying bit by Lord's Wood, I think?" "I have," said he. "And do you suppose," continued Lawson, "that without some over-looker, those vagabond navvies are going to respect your property? Not a bit of it. Why, before they have half finished that big cutting for this extension to Yearsett—hard red marl, and sandstone, and bog into the bargain—they'll be all over the place. I think you are blind to your own interests, Mr. Solloway!" But there was a good deal of talking to be done before they could turn him; but at last self-interest prevailed. "Where is he?" said the old man. "Will you see him if I bring him?"

"Yes," said he. "John!" cried Lawson, "come up!" And uncle and nephew met again, after many years' estrangement.

That settled it. "Uncle," said Lewis, "I've cut the drink for ever; and I'll serve you well and honestly, if you'll have me. Give me another chance!" "Stay, then," said Solloway.

"George," Lewis said, when they were about to leave, "I thank you; and you too, Jessie. You shall not regret this day's good work for me."

As he was wishing them good-bye, Jessie took his hand, and said, "John; one word! I did not think you thought so much of me —so kindly. I am now a widow, and shall never marry; but, as a friend, call on me when you like. Forget the past, as I shall; and, for old acquaintance sake, accept this from me. Nay; you must. It is but a trifle; but it's freely given. Take it to please

me. I am very glad to be of service to you, and so is George. We wish you luck, and better days in store. Good-bye."

As they drove off, he opened it. Two five-pound notes! He burst out crying. He was like too many others in this world—more sinned against than sinning. That night he vowed amendment. He kept that vow.

This was the sequel. In two years after, when his uncle died—he had never left his room—he found he had left him all he had to leave. Longlands was vacant. He applied for it; and, backed by Mr. Hamilton's good words, the landlord took him on.

None shirked him then at Upperton. John Lewis was a changed man altogether, and held his head up.

CHAPTER XII.

A FAIR ARRANGEMENT, BUT A FIX FOR MOSS.

THREE years have passed; the scene again is Eymor. The time is June, sweet summer time; blue sky and birds, and greenery and flowers, and scentful breeze, for haymakers are busy, down in the Eymor meadows—the same haymakers we have met before, who chatter while they turn, and who now are gossiping about the one—the only absent one—who used to make them merry—Mary "Moss."

"It niver con ba true!" says Potts; "youm crammin ma." "It be," says Turner,

as he moves his scythe; "a heerd it." "That's roight enough," says Roberts, with a swish; "saame here: they teld ma at the Shop. Houd hard, let's whet 'em."

And as the scythes ring out as each mower whets his own, Mrs. Gould sticks her fork in the ground, and says, "It's laft ta Jessie. Jaane, whaat's think o' that?" "Whaat's think yoursen, oud Thresher?" was her answer, alluding to the employment of the spouse of Mrs. Gould, and the means she was supposed to use for his subjugation. "Ul pug thee ar, oud Jaane, direckerly, a ool." "Thee oona. Thee alleys spoke agin hur, is yer did," says she to Mrs. Smith; "an now look at hur! Hur's brought hur little pigs at last ta markit, an seld 'em." "Is, hur have," remarks Mrs. Davis; "an a alleys stood hup fur hur. A know'd," said Jemima, "hur'd come roight side toppermast sooner or laater." "Whaat's the figure?" says

Pritchett. "Six thousan pound, Sapphira." "That it aint. Thray thousan," Turner says; "theyn harved it, fur Moss he teld ma; theer now."

"Whaat! thray ta Mary, an the rest ta Jessie?" "That's jist the soize on it; youn got it." "The Lord blass us an saave us!" says Mrs. Gould; "whaativer be the world a-comin to? Ta think o' our Mary. Hur'll keep hur carridge!" "A shoodna oonder," is Sapphira's answer; "an sarvunts too, fur sartin." "A oonder ef hur'll drass in silk, ur satin," says Mrs. Jones. "Whoy, naythur; hur'll hev a welwet drass an scarlet fathur," says Johnny Austin's mother; "see ef hur don't." "Theer'll summat appen arter this, youn see, ur alse this ain't a fork!" and Mrs. Pritchett poised the implement. "Though oonst a gipsy gurl, hur's now a laady. Lord blass us!"

Yes; it was true enough. Jessie had come into a legacy of six thousand pounds, clear cash; and she had given the half of it to Mary. They had both been up to London, and had just returned; and it was now all settled.

It seems that about three weeks before the grass was cut, Jessie had a letter from Anderson, telling her that some money had been left her, and to come up to Town at once; and adding, that as she would have to be there for a little while, if Mary liked to come with her, to bring her, and he would pay expenses; and that they could both stay with him and Nelly. The idea of going to London kept Mary awake most of that night, and on the morrow she and Jessie started; and Anderson met them at the station, and drove them to his house, which, as we have already stated, was close by Holland Park.

He then showed her the advertisement in the "Times," which thus was worded:—

JACKSON, JESSIE JANE (*née* JESSIE JANE LAWSON).—Should this meet the eye of the above-named, she is requested to send her address to C. H., Messrs. Harper, law stationers, Furnival's Inn, W.C. Any person enabling the advertiser to ascertain the address, or prove the death, of the above-named will be rewarded.

The cause of this advertisement was the will of old James Jackson, Arnold's father, which left to Jessie just six thousand pounds; and twenty thousand pounds to Mrs. Armiger, his daughter Lizzie.

When James Jackson retired from business—which he did mainly through taking his son's absence so much to heart—he left Dulwich, and went back to Matlock, where Mrs. Jackson very shortly died. His daughter was abroad, in Italy, and too ill to return. Before he had been six months a widower, he read the news of his son Arnold's death.

Left all alone, his daughter now away, the old man from that day felt desolate; fell ill, and rallied, then fell ill again; and lingered on, a perfect invalid, till just three months ago; when, wearied out with fretting —so they said—he died at last—alone, with strangers; for all was over when his daughter came.

The will was read—and this short statement, which was added to it—the date was six months after Arnold's death. "The sum I hereby leave to Jessie Jackson is as some atonement for the wrong I did her, in discarding my son Arnold, her late husband, whose death is proved."

After Anderson and Jessie had been to Furnival's Inn, and he had shown her that it was all clear about the legacy, and had left Mary's address for Mrs. Armiger, in case she wished to write—which she never did—he said, when they got home again, "when this

money is paid in—which, as I know both the trustees and the executors, will be without delay—what should you wish to do with it?" "I shall give one-half to Mary," was her answer. "You really wish it?" "I do; she is Arnold's sister," Jessie said, "and she ought to have it." "I am glad you think so, though it is all your own, clear money."

"But won't there be expenses out of it, something deducted?" "No, not a penny. It is left to you 'free from legacy duty,' and will therefore be paid in without any deduction whatever." "But there will be the lawyers to pay, won't there?" "No," said Anderson; "both the solicitor's fees and the duty will be paid out of the estate—the six thousand left is clear." "Oh, that is fortunate! Why, what a sum!" "Yes, it is worth having, certainly, and I trust, Jenny, it will be the means of making you com-

fortable. Your wish then is, three thousand in your own name, and the rest in her's?" "It is; and I hope that we shall always live together. It will set George up, and her. He is going to marry her when mother settles. She has promised Moss." "Yes, I heard about it; when is it to be?" "In autumn, probably—father will then have been dead just two years. He died a few days after you were married—the last day of October."

When the two years' grace expired, Harry Anderson had claimed his bride. "You don't regret you went back home again?" "Oh, no! He died at last, poor fellow, in my arms; and knew me." "Shall I call Mary?" "If you like," said Jessie. So Mary came, and Anderson then told her of Jessie's offer.

"Oh, you dear good soul," said Mary, as she put her arms round her and kissed her; "but I must not take it." "Indeed you

must though; for had your father been aware that you were living, you would have had it all." "But whatever can I do with it!" said Mary, wonderingly. "Help George to stock the farm," suggested Jessie. "And help my father, too, that dear old Moss, when he gets married, Jessie, to your mother. That will be then some return to him and you. He shall have a thousand of it, that he shall! He's kept me all these years, and well deserves it."

Both Anderson and Jessie tried to reason her out of it, and talked of her being "just" before she was "generous;" and that as Moss, having always been a steady man, and no drinker, had put by money, they thought half that—five hundred—would be sufficient. It would certainly help him, and show him that she was not ungrateful.

But Mary would not hear of it. There

had been no call for him to take to her, and many a man would have left her where he found her, and what would then have become of her? Why, the gipsies would have got her again. No, a third of it—one thousand—he should have, or she would not touch a penny! So it was decided at that; and Anderson arranged to get everything completed as soon as possible, and to see to all for them.

The result of that decision may be here named. One day in the ensuing autumn, shortly before Moss was married, Mary said "Father, I have got this pocket-book for you, if you'll accept it." "Thank you, Mary; it will do to put down my odd bits about the game and things; but God bless the girl, you need not have had my name put on it!" said he, as he saw his own name in full on the outside of it. "Worcester Old Bank!" said Moss, as he turned it over.

"Yes, Worcester Old Bank," said Mary. "Open it." He did so.

"Aug. 1st. Cash — £1,000," was the entry. There was no mistaking it. There was that sum in the Bank placed to his credit! So Mary told him how it came about —they had kept it secret as to that "one third"—and giving him a kiss, said, "and I wish it was ten times as much, you dear good old father, for all your care of me. We shall now all be happy together, I hope." But Moss was bothered. Although she said he must take it, he did not see how he could, "the master would not keep him." "Not keep you!" Mary said. "No," Moss replied, "not when he finds I'm worth a thousand pounds. He'd fear I'd shirk my duty. Besides," said he, "what could a man like me do with that sum? Oh, I couldn't Mary, I couldn't really! No, I've got a bit I've put by on the quiet, and it's where no one

can find it. That will do for me, with what the master gives me. You keep it, lass: it will help you too, and George."

However, the difficulty was solved, as George himself came in; for he told him he could easily avoid having "too" much to spend, by keeping it in the Bank, and drawing only the forty or fifty pounds a-year it would bring him. "Then," said he, "if you get past work, old boy, or someone nobbles you, there will be money to fly to, when it's wanted." But for all that, Moss did not half like taking it. The debt was on his side, he said, and not hers; for her having been such a comfort to him all these years.

When it became known, "our Mary" was more beloved than ever. "A alleys sad hur wan a good un, is a did," said Mrs. Pritchett, "and so did orl on us; a mortal little good un, that us did." But it was a decided sur-

prise to all of them that the outward show of a carriage and servants was not indulged in; and as for Mrs. Austin, the absence of that "welwet drass an scarlet fathur," which she had looked upon as the certain attire of Mary for the future, was a puzzler she could not get over; for, as she said, "Whaat's the use o' hevin' a bit o' money laft yer ef so be as yer dunna putt some on it o' yer back?" a query so feminine that she may be excused for making it.

"Well," said Nelly, as she came to them, "have you people settled all about your riches? I congratulate you both;" for as she had been in the adjoining room with her baby, she had heard it all. "Then come and see my boy; he is just asleep." "Oh, what a dear little fellow he looks!" said Jessie. "He looks prettier even than he did yesterday. And how old did you say he was?" "Ten months to-morrow." "You must let me

nurse him when he wakes, Miss Nelly." "And me, please, Mrs. Anderson," said Mary. "I can trust Jessie," said Nelly; "but I fear, Mary, you would drop him." "Oh, let her get her hand in," Harry said.

"Look here, Jessie," said Nelly, as she turned and pointed to one of several pictures that were hung round the room—her morning room, "do you know this?" "Oh, yes," said she; "that's your old shed at home. And that's the common. Oh! and there's our house!" "Well, I declare, if there isn't father's, too," said Mary. "Why, Mrs. Anderson, did you paint that!" "Yes," Nelly said, "and every one of these, and those two snow scenes." "Well, that is nice!" said Jessie. "Why, it must be just like being at home when you sit here." "It is," said Nelly, "thanks to this good soul. Now just you give an account of yourself, sir," said she, putting her arm through his, and looking up

at him in her old joyous way; "and tell them how sly you were." But his only answer was a kiss and laugh.

"Then if you won't, I must. You know, Jessie, when mamma and I came here, before I was married, this great sly fellow said—and he said it as seriously as possible—'And now I will show you, Mrs. Hamilton, the room I have fixed on for Nelly's morning-room, if, at least, she likes it. It has merely a few odd things and some pictures in it at present; but when we get the upholsterer to work, I hope to make it pretty. It has the morning sun on it, and there is a nice view from it; and the garden is down below.' Well, that, you see, was all his make-believe, for when we came up here, there the room was—finished, just as you see it now. Is it not pretty?" "It is," said Jessie. "I thought mine pretty, that poor Arnold gave me, but this is prettier. It's simply beauti-

ful; and so is this little garden. Look down, Mary."

And Mary looked between the climbing roses, at brilliant beds of flowers, and shrubs, and rockery; the latter split by sundry little falls of sparkling water, splashing on to ferns.

"Well, when we saw the pictures," Nelly said, "it all came out. Yes, there they were, all hung as you now see them. All my own doing; and he said he had 'sold' them!" "Yes," said Harry, "sold them to myself. I presented them with one hand, and paid for them with the other." "And so we found," continued Nelly, "that he it was who had been the purchaser! and we knew then why he had always wished me to paint 'home-scenes,' because he was aware what a home girl I was; and that it would be a pleasure to me, when I had left my own home, to have those scenes by me; to sit

and look at, and call up old friends, which I can always do when I gaze upon that common and those cottages. Was it not kind of him? I was obliged to kiss him, for it was so thoughtful. And there! he sent me money for them—every one. Oh, you wicked fellow, to tell such stories! Come here, sir, directly, and let me love you."

So Harry did as he was bid, and came; and then they went into the studio—for now he always painted there, at home; he had left North Audley Street. Beside his easel was another—Nelly's; and on it a canvass, with her own baby's likeness, nearly finished. "While nurse has baby, I sit here," said she, "and paint by Harry; and sometimes I paint with baby on my lap, he is so good. We are all the day together. Is it not nice? You must see his pictures." "And see hers too," said he; "I'll take you. She has three at Suffolk Street."

So the next day he took them there; and the day after, he and Nelly went with them to the Academy, to see his own pictures, and the rest that were there. As they entered the princely rooms in Piccadilly, Jessie was delighted. "Rather an improvement, is it not, over the old rooms in the Square?" "It is indeed," said she. "That was where they were the year that I left Town."

As for Mary, she did not know which to look at most, the pictures or the company. They had tea in the restaurant, and then came back through the Park, where Mary had her first glimpse of Royalty—the Princess, and the Prince; and on a future day she saw the Queen, and then a Drawing Room; that, what with all she saw while out with Jessie, in London and the Parks, and what she saw with them, it took her some time to consider when she got back

home, before she could tell Moss everything —she had seen so much.

Jessie also took her to Dulwich, to show her where she lived—with Mary's dear old "Jack"—and the New College, and the Picture Gallery, where she and Arnold had spent hours together; and on to Streatham, where Mary's sister Lizzie used to live; the one who boxed her ears so frequently, for misbehaviour.

Then Jessie went to Norwood, to see the grave where little Harry lay, and take some flowers. But upon it were fresh flowers, and round it roses; one mass of pretty blossoms, pink and white; and, thickly strewn there, were forget-me-nots. "Oh! this, indeed, is kind," said Jessie, warmly, her trickling tears showing how she felt it. She knew the hands that had been busy there; she knew by whom those rose trees had been planted.

She brought a bunch away, and brought

some sprays, to plant at home—rose-leaves to treasure, living blooms to pick, year after year, in sweet remembrance of her darling boy—blooms from the trees that blossom by his grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TABLES TURNED.—THE MISTRESS AT THE FARM.

"WHOSE turn-out is that, Jabez?" said Brown, of Bromyard, as two ladies in sealskins went by in a pony-carriage, past Wood's the miller—the one driving, and the other chatting to a gentleman in scarlet, who was trotting alongside them. "They have some nice dogs with them," said he, alluding to a Dandie Dinmont and a fox terrier that were in the carriage, and a fine fawn mastiff that was running by the side of it; "and that's a good stepping mare, too." "Yes,"

said Wood, "she is. They are the Squire's daughters; Mrs. Anderson, and Miss Hamilton —Miss Laura; and the gentleman on the bay is their brother, young Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Robert—he went by this morning to meet the hounds. He manages the farm now for his father, and is a rare cross-country rider." "Oh, that's young Hamilton, is it? I have heard of him. They say he goes as straight as a pigeon!" "So I believe," said Wood. "But he always was a good plucked one. It seems but the other day—though it is a matter of seven years ago, for it was when Jenny was married, that he rode in a race in my mill-meadow—two of 'em, a donkey race and a pony race, and won each time; and he was then but a lad of twelve. And, before he was turned fourteen, he actually got the brush, one day with hounds!"

"The deuce he did!" said Brown. "Oh,

he is a rare fellow, he is, I can tell you, to show 'em the way across country, and so is Mr. Frank." "What's he doing now, Jabez?" "Oh, farming. He's got Elmore's End, where Gilbert lived—he gave it up; got left a heap of money." "I think I heard of it. Was it Frank who married the parson's daughter?" "Yes," said Wood, "Miss Clara; as nice a fair-haired girl as you'd see in a day's march; and she is good to the poor, too, and goes about amongst them just the same as Miss Nelly—that's Mrs. Anderson—used to do. She's a treasure if you like to any man, is Mrs. Anderson; and so will her sister be, Miss Laura, who is now a fine-grown girl, and just takes after her." "A family well-respected, Wood, so they say." "Yes, and justly so. I don't know a better man than the old Squire; and, as for his wife, Mrs. Hamilton, she is one of the most motherly women I ever met.

"The parson, too, he is well-beloved, and so is his family. Miss Clara—that's Mrs. Frank Hamilton, she is the eldest daughter; there is another, Miss Emma, and a son in London, an architect." "That's a dairy farm, is it not—Elmore's End?" "Yes," said Wood, "it is, and a very good one, too. He ought to make a lot of money there, for he has one of the best managers, in the poultry and dairy line, any man could have—Mrs. Warmington, who used to manage for Gilbert. He kept her on."

"How is your daughter, Mrs. Warrilow?" "Oh, pretty well, thank you, as times go, only she is getting, I fear, too many youngsters about her. She has four lads and a girl, and that husband of her's says they want three girls, now, 'to match 'em.' There'll be more cats than mice to keep 'em, I think, by-and-by. Come in, Brown, and taste my barland. I've got some famous stuff this

time, I can tell you, and it will go well with a pipe. And stay and join us, as 'tis New Year's Eve; Edward and Jenny will be across presently, and we expect a friend or two." "Not to-night, Wood. I will just taste the tap, and have one pipe with you, but then I'll be going. I always spend this night with them at home; and my wife and the lads will be looking for me." So the two old friends went in.

A second time had New Year's Eve come round, since Jessie had her money.

"Well, Nell!" said Mr. Hamilton, as Whiteface stopped at the door, and she threw the reins to Davis; "so you met with Bob?" "Yes, pápa," said she, "and we have so enjoyed the drive." "What sport, Bob?" "Famous, father. We got on an old dog-fox at once, and he gave us a splendid burst of thirty minutes to Saltmarsh, over no end of a country; lots down; and then, after a

ten-minutes' check, we got on to him again, and ran him back across the gardens, straight to Old Storage and across to Cradley, and to the back of the Malvern Hills; and there they ran into him in the open. Five-and-fifty minutes, good; and the pace a pelter!" "Where were you?" "One of five at the finish." "That's right, then," said his father, as old Joe took the horse, and Bob, now a fine strapping fellow, turned into the house with his sisters. "Was Freeman with you at the finish, or Burgess?" "Neither, father. The one came to grief by Knightwick, and the other at Storage."

"Well, Harry," said Nelly, as her husband met her, "and pray what sport have you had this afternoon?" "Very good," said Anderson. "Frank and I beat your father as to pheasants, though he beat us as to birds and total head." "Yes," said Frank, "the governor knocked over three beggaring

rabbits as he came back, and made them count." "Fairly shot, anyhow, my lad," said his father, laughing. "But when you young people make me thrice a grandfather, you must make allowances for old age."

"Is that Frank?" cried a lady's voice from the upper regions. "Here, Clara's calling you," said Mr. Hamilton; "go up and nurse the youngster. That's the fruits of matrimony!" So Frank went off, laughing, as Nelly's nurse came in and brought the baby; and with her came a curly-headed boy, the image of her, who at once made straight for "grandpa." "Well, you young shaver," said Mr. Hamilton, as he got him on his knee, and at once began to jig him to "Daddy goes a-hunting;" "and how old are you?" "Say two years and a-half old in March, grandpapa," said Nelly. "And how old is bab, Nell?" "She is just twelve months, papa." "And a very fine child too."

"Here they are, then!" said he, as Mr. and Miss Arundell came by the window; and in half an hour they had all sat down to dinner; Mrs. Hamilton looking as happy as possible to see her children once more around her on a New Year's Eve. They had asked the Rector there, that he might feel his loss the less, as that time last year his dear good wife was living. She died rather suddenly, in May, just six months after Clara married Frank.

With the dessert came the babies for exhibition; Laura begging to be allowed to nurse Clara's—a laughing little lad of four months old. "There's some sort in that lad," said Mr. Hamilton; "as likely looking a four-year-old as I have seen for some time." "Four 'months' papa," said Nelly, and Clara laughed. "All the better, then," said he; "if you've luck with him he'll be a prime one. He's just like what Bob was at his

he would like to manage that farm for his sister; for if so, she should have it if she would take it.

"George at first said it would be too much for him; but as Wood pointed out to him that, as there was the main thing, 'money,' and he could find the work, they settled it. So Jessie had it. I valued the stock and things for her," said Mr. Hamilton, "and Kirby, Minchem's uncle, priced all for him. Well, we were pretty near each other. His total was £816 odd, and mine £840; so we split the difference. Minchem wished a sale of household things, but his uncle over-ruled it; and as I, on her behalf, offered him a lump sum of one thousand pounds, for stock, and implements, and furniture, and all, he took it; paid off Wood, and left.

"That thousand pounds was paid to me by Jessie—her own money—because, as she said, George would have to undertake the

management of it for her. That left her two thousand, which, with Mary's two thousand—one thousand as you know, she gave to Moss—gave them, jointly, four thousand pounds, with which to start in life. A very comfortable sum," said Mr. Hamilton.

"She and Mary and George then went there, this last Candlemas; and as soon as he had got things into shape a bit, and could turn himself round, he and Mary, as you know, got married; and now, I suppose, no three people live more happily than they do, or are more likely to do well. Little Mary was always a good hand amongst the poultry, and they have a rare lot there, I can tell you, she and Jessie; and as for the farm—well, any man can see the difference. Look at the fences! not a stick out of place. Rather different to what it was then." "Yes, it is indeed," said Mr. Arundell.

"How does Moss get on?" "Very well,

very well indeed. I thought the old woman might have a liking for Landimoor, so when George left, I gave Moss the offer of it; and as I told him he should still be keeper, he agreed. It fills up his time, and amuses him, and George puts him in the way of it. He will put by money, you'll see. It's a little fruity place and lucky; and Moss is steady. A very worthy man indeed; I much respect him." "It was a lucky move for Aaron and Rebecca." "Yes, I think it was," said Mr. Hamilton, "for he told me that such a season as they had this time they never had before."

But the mole man, who still worked in with Jem the fisherman, had now extra strings to his bow; not only plants and flowers, and fish and fossils, but agarics, moths and butterflies, and bats and birds; and the extra space afforded was warmly welcomed. The keeper's cottage, too, had greater attractions for the gipsy parties, as

there was a circular clearing in the front of it, well turfed over—a famous dancing-place—and shaded by a tall acacia, which, growing at the back of the house, spread its long limbs over the roof, and half way across the sward. And as all besides that clearing was dense wood, with any quantity of winding paths, the locality exactly suited those who came there; for, as Aaron said, the various couples could get "lost" so easily! Jem's cottage—one of three by the quarry, Wainwright and Shepherd occupying the others—was taken by old Morton and his wife; as William the wagoner, who had married Prissie, had gone to the old people's place by the bottom of the common, so as to be nearer his work.

Other changes in Eymor may be also named here. Charles Davis, who is still the groom, has broken with Selina Morris, so he no longer learns songs to sing to her, as he did

of old; nor is he now liable to the constant annoyance of having to shift from the stile at night, for Abraham Peplow to get over. He stuck to her pluckily, though, for at one time he liked her; but as he had no brogue himself, her "ool yer" was too much for him; and as, do what he would, he could never get her further than "wool yer," he gave it up; and they now say that—though he is ten years her senior, he means having Polly Everill, who is just nineteen, and smart and saucy. Old Joe, however, still dandles after Hannah Pippit, and says young men's sayings in an old man's manner; but though their united ages amount to seven-score years and one, it is still thought that matrimony will be the ending of it.

Poor Tom Norton is dead—gored by a cow, poor fellow. Had he lived, Patty Haden would have had him. Potts, the mower, too is dead, from a scythe cut, mowing; and Jack,

the lad at Gilbert's, who broke his neck in taking some young rooks. Miss Rose, the pretty barmaid at the "Arms," has left—she married a traveller; and Sheba Tunstall has met her mate. Burton, the blacksmith, is in full force. Ford still keeps the Gate; and Amphlett the cider shop. Byfield continues to stick the pigs, Mr. Wallace to drill the lads, and Walker is "men man." And old Noah still jogs along the road with his two greys, Dobbin and Poppit.

The widow Benbow is dead; she died soon after Bessie, and they buried her by her, beneath the two old yews. The usual carol singers, when they come up—as all the party there are having coffee, are three lads short; for Nat Austin and Dick Whittaker have each a place in Worcester, to mind a horse and cart; and the elder Gould has been put with a grocer at Wolverhampton. Peterkin, the magpie, who used to be teased by them,

is as impudent as ever, but he still keeps his head on his shoulders. Tim Benbow Frank took to; and he says he shall make a man of him. He is wagoner's lad there. Mrs. Goode, who behaved so well to Jessie, has retired from business; and John and Betsy Plummer, who did their part too, are settled comfortably at Wellesbourne, with George Jenkins.

Per contra, Reuben Lee, that vile old "Gipsy Jack," and Lock, have both got their deserts; as also the two women who were with them. They were sentenced at Worcester Assizes for highway robbery with violence; the men to twenty lashes each, and seven years' penal servitude; and the women to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. Moss chuckled when he read it, and who shall blame him?

As to the Bickley people, Uncle Charles is still as jolly as ever; and his daughter

Annie is engaged to Mr. Cameron. They are coming down to Eymor on the morrow, to spend their New Year's Day. Fred has gone to New Zealand, and is doing famously; Mrs. Maberley still keeps house, and her daughter Rose grows prettier. William Arundell, the Rector's son, he too is doing well; and his father, in the morning, intends driving in to Worcester, to meet him and Charles Cameron, as they will leave Town by the ten train. The Doctor—Burt—is still flourishing, and as popular as ever; and he says, Lewis of Longlands is a steady man, and is doing well. Mrs. Murray continues to do what good she can, and is duly censured for it by the Reverend Martin, who still believes in his simple son.

Miss Aymes is with her sister at Kensington, and often calls on Nelly; and Charles Addison, the schoolmaster, occasionally comes to Eymor, where he is duly

shown Bob's prizes, and is as duly reminded by Mr. Hamilton, of "pluck and muscle." Nelly still keeps up her custom of New Year's Gifts, and a special box each Christmas is amongst her luggage. She has been round to the old people to-day, and she will take the things for the youngsters to-morrow; for she still is "thoughtful Nelly Hamilton" as much as ever — the poor-folks' favourite, her father's pet.

Here ends our story. Slight as it is, it brings just these thoughts with it—That should dark days come for us, as dark days came for Jessie Lawson and for Mary Moss, and darker still for Lewis in his trouble, it would be well for us to remember that the darkest hour of all precedes the dawn, and that to every cloud there is a silver lining. And also, that while we, like Nelly Hamilton, forget not kindness to our poorer neighbours,

nor, like her brother, courtesy to all, we shall be none the less likely to find that brighter side—should dark days come—if, like her father, too, we have faith and trust —faith in the future, trust in Him who shapes it—

"Good often is where evil seems to be."

The line applies to persons, and events.

FINIS.

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